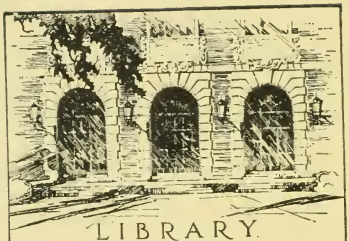

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MODERN FLIRTATIONS;

OR,

A MONTH AT HARROWGATE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

BY

CATHERINE SINCLAIR,

AUTHOR OF "MODERN ACCOMPLISHMENTS," EIGHTH THOUSAND; "MODERN SOCIETY," SIXTH THOUSAND; "HILL AND VALLEY," THIRD THOUSAND; "SCOTLAND AND THE SCOTCH," THIRD THOUSAND; "SHETLAND AND THE SHETLANDERS," SECOND THOUSAND; "HOLIDAY HOUSE," THIRD THOUSAND; "CHARLIE SEYMOUR," THIRD THOUSAND, ETC.

"I clasped my hand close to my breast,
While my heart was as light as a feather,
Yet nothing I said I protest,
But, —— 'Madam! 'tis very fine weather!'"

Ritson's Songs.

VOL. II.

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MODERN FLIRTATIONS.

CHAPTER I.

Playful she turn'd, that he might see
The passing smile her cheek put on ;
But when she mark'd how mournfully
His eye met hers, that smile was gone.
LALLA ROOKH.

MARION had a genius for being happy, and much as the unexpected ball had amused her, she hurried along the road to Portobello, her cheek dimpling at the recollection of all that had passed, while she confidently anticipated one pleasure yet to come from it, the amusement she knew Sir Arthur would derive from her adventure ; for never did two individuals, when together, seem to converse more in ac-

cordance with Dr Johnson's rule, than Marion and her uncle, that " the aged should remember they have been young, and the young that they must yet be old."

As Marion arrived within sight of the cottage, her step became more buoyant, and her thoughts more joyous, when, seeing Sir Arthur at his open window, she waved her handkerchief to him; and Henry, leaping out from a height of about ten feet, ran laughing to meet her, his rich brown hair waving in the wind, his colour heightened by the exercise, and his eye sparkling with the joy of this very unexpected meeting.

While Marion poured out the tea, and poured out, at the same time, a whole flood of recollections and circumstances connected with the ball, Sir Arthur equalled her utmost hopes, in being amused and enlivened by the description, while he said, in a rallying tone, looking fondly at her bright happy countenance, " My dear Marion! you will never get on in the fashionable world! You look too pleased and happy, like a girl in the Christmas holidays! That will never do! It

is the fashion to be exceedingly fastidious and discontented. You must positively give yourself some airs, or I shall have to be angry at you."

"You, uncle Arthur! Do let me see you angry! I cannot fancy such a thing! But pray, publish a volume of advice to young ladies on their first coming out! It would be a great pity for the rising generation not to benefit by your remarks," said Marion, gayly seating herself at the window. "I feel this morning as cheerful as that view of yours from the window, where the waves are dancing in sunshine, the ocean one liquid diamond, the sands all sparkling with gladness, and the white-winged vessels gliding joyfully along."

"External things take their expression from the feelings with which they are looked at," replied Sir Arthur, with sudden emotion. "That wide desert of sand seems to me this morning boundless as human wishes, and barren as their reality! I would not willingly throw a cloud over your happy face, Marion; but it must be! How strange, that even you, young and joyous as you are, must be doomed,

like all the children of man, to sorrow! The delight of seeing you here, my very dear girl, had banished all care from my mind for a time; but it is on your account, far—far more than my own, that I feel anxious and melancholy."

Marion put her arm gently within that of Sir Arthur, and looked affectionately, but silently, in his face, while he continued, in accents of manly regret and indignation, while there was a mournful tenderness in the look he turned on his niece,

"You have not yet heard, Marion, that the little I ever had, has been made less by a mean transaction of my nephew's. For my own part, this matters little, as it is not in the nature of things, that with all my accumulated infirmities, I should live as much as a couple of years. My sight has almost entirely failed, my general health is equally bad, and my long-faded spirits owe their best support to religion, and to the affection of yourself and Henry."

Marion silently and tearfully kissed her uncle's cheek, and pressed his hand more

closely in her own, while he proceeded, in accents of increasing emotion,

" My boy here wishes, as he ought, to pursue a profession, and Henry will be an honour to any one he enters. He has never cost me an anxious thought, nor a single shilling. I trust his anonymous annuity will be always continued, and that on his account I need not lament my impoverished circumstances; but my chief earthly care is for you, Marion.—Though Agnes, too, shews me little attention, and no kindness, I cannot forget whose child she is, nor think of her future life without anxiety. I had hoped to have the means of being useful to you both while I lived—to have offered you a shelter here, in case, as I expect soon, there should be no other for you—and to have left you both at last above absolute penury, when I am at rest in the grave. It is for your sakes only, that I would now cling to the tattered shreds of my worn-out existence; but this is a difficult world for unprotected, portionless girls, in which to buffet their way onwards. Remember, dear Marion, it is my misfortune, not my fault, if

death now overtake me before I can do anything for my brother's children."

Marion clasped her arms round Sir Arthur's neck, and wept in silence. There was a weight of grief in all he had said, for which she was totally unprepared, and which she felt in every fibre of her heart. Sir Patrick's disgraceful conduct, and the impending departure of Henry, so long her companion and friend, were afflictions for which she was in some degree prepared; and they seemed as nothing, compared with what her venerable uncle said, for the first time, of himself. He was a strong-minded man, unwilling to obtrude his infirmities and feelings on the notice of any one, anxious always rather to borrow cheerfulness from those around, than to cause anxiety or grief; but a sense of its absolute necessity had induced him to shew Marion, in some degree, her real position, and in doing so, had obliged him for once to speak of his own pecuniary losses and growing frailty. Long as the Admiral had been threatened with blindness, brought on by the pernicious climates in which he had served, the appre-

hension of actually losing him had hitherto been so far from Marion's thoughts, that she frequently pleased herself with anticipating the time when she might herself supply, by reading to him and walking with him, the place of that gloomy and spectral-looking Mr Howard, one of the few people in the world whom Marion disliked, at the same time that she almost envied him for being so constantly in the society of Sir Arthur, and for being so indispensably useful to him.

Marion felt that the world would be cold and bleak to her indeed, as if the sun had left the firmament, if she lost the warmth of affection and kindness to which, from infancy, she had been accustomed, in the house of her beloved uncle, the only parent she had ever known. If such a misfortune were to come, who would then advise her—who would then be interested in her feelings—who would believe in the sincerity of her affections—who would be happy when she appeared, and grieved when she departed? All this rushed upon Marion's young mind when she arose to depart, while bitter tears coursed each other

down her cheeks, and large drops stood in the nearly blinded eyes of Sir Arthur, which he endeavoured to hide, as he affectionately embraced her, saying, in a tone of dignified, but melancholy composure,

" Come back soon, my dear girl! Let me see that face often, while I can see at all! You are the ivy giving life and cheerfulness to a blasted tree."

" Let me remain with you always!" whispered Marion, in a tone of the deepest earnestness, " dear uncle Arthur! It is impossible to tell how happy I could be with you, but I have an abhorrence now, not to be expressed, of my present situation. It seems little short of swindling even for me, to live as I do, with all our debts unpaid. When I sit down at my brother's table, or wear the dresses he gives me, I cannot but feel myself an accomplice. It is degrading to my very heart, and I would not willingly do it. Take me home, dear uncle, to the best home I have ever known. Let me read to you, write for you, walk with you, and we shall be so happy, —so very happy together."

" It may come to that soon, dear Marion, and when it does, no parent ever received his own child with more pleasure than I shall welcome you. Even with all my shame and sorrow, then, for your brother, my very heart shall rejoice to see you, but not yet. Patrick is your guardian,—a most unfit one certainly; —but while he is able and willing to receive you, which cannot probably be long,—it would ill become me to interfere. In remaining with him, you fulfil your father's will, who bequeathed you to his care,—a trust he has but little deserved. Remain with him, however, at present, and do not feel answerable for his actions or circumstances, over which you have no control.

CHAPTER II.

"The drink! the drink! I am poisoned!"
SHAKSPEARE.

MARION'S walk back from Portobello was of a very different aspect from her gay outset in the morning, and nature seemed to have suddenly gone out of tune as she gazed around, with an altered eye on the sombre massy hills with their giant shadows, throwing into mysterious obscurity the tall ancient buildings of the doleful Canongate, which looked like the ghost of a departed city; and the melancholy magnificence of Holyrood reminded her of greatness in adversity, while she reflected that the royal houses of Stuart and of Bourbon had there found a dismal refuge in their ut-

most destitution. But more immediately connected with herself, and more interesting still to her thoughts, though rather a sinking in poetry, was the consideration that there her own brother had been driven by his folly and indiscretion, and that her father's family, so long respected in Scotland, seemed now about to be finally extinguished in penury and disgrace. It was a misfortune without remedy, for Marion knew the limit of her influence with Sir Patrick to be less than nothing, and she believed that not a living being possessed more. She had never heard a surmise of his attachment to Clara, or deep and unconquerable as it was, she might have entertained some hope that the love of virtue and goodness in others, might lead to a respect for it in himself, though none can doubt the melancholy truth, that, as fevers are infectious, but health is not, so moral evil is far more contagious than moral good.

After a hurried walk, Marion reached home in some trepidation, lest she might be too late to dress for dinner, an offence which Sir Patrick always visited with his utmost indignation;

but on entering the house, she was alarmed and surprised to hear, from the butler, that Agnes had been seized with sudden illness very soon after her return from Lady Towercliffe's ball, and that she was unable to leave her bed.

Marion flew, rather than walked up stairs, and entered her sister's room with the most affectionate solicitude, but great was her astonishment to find Agnes stretched almost insensible on the bed, and evidently in an agony of suffering, pale, cold, and languid. Her spirits were evidently in the lowest depression, and, for the first time in her life, she seemed to consider herself a mere mortal like other people.

Dixon, in the mean time, watched over the invalid with an air of excessive, almost exaggerated solicitude, emitting a series of very ostentatious sighs, while she kept her place close beside the bed, so as to exclude every one else, and made eager signs to Marion when she entered, to leave the room without speaking, and not approach her sister, or agitate her in any way.

Without heeding any such signals, how-

ever, Marion approached the bed-side with noiseless steps, and quietly assuming the place which had been occupied by Dixon, gently took hold of Agnes' hand, which felt so cold and clammy, that she started with a degree of alarm, greatly increased by the sight of the invalid's altered aspect.

"Have you called in a doctor?" said she, anxiously, "Surely Patrick does not know how very ill you are, Agnes?"

"Dixon says he thought nothing of it, and recommended me to put off my illness till after the assembly! unfeeling wretch! when I shall perhaps never recover. Since then he is gone out hunting," added Agnes, with a peevish look at Marion, as if it were her fault, "and he will not return home before night!"

"Who said Patrick had gone out hunting? It is not the case! I met him in the passage, and he had been told you complained only of a slight nervous headach!" said Marion, glancing at Dixon, whose countenance wore an expression so sinister and peculiar, that Marion felt the colour rush to her face with surprise, but turned away in-

stantly to conceal how much she had been startled by it, though determined privately to watch Dixon's face more narrowly than before, while feeling a vague apprehension of she knew not what.

"Miss Dunbar must be kept quiet;" observed Dixon, in a harsh sulky voice, "she ought not to speak. It only fatigues her, and she should see no one!"

"Who ordered that?" asked Marion, with a scrutinizing look at the abigail's averted face. "I shall remain here, Dixon, therefore leave the room yourself at present."

While the abigail angrily and slowly prepared to obey this authoritative command, Agnes turned her pallid face towards Marion, saying, in a faint voice, and with a look of extreme lassitude,

"Dixon says I have been in a delirium! She is probably right, for I could have been certain that when the shutters were closed I heard a voice in that farthest corner of my room. It sounded like muttered curses, and a dark figure crossed the fire-place. Could it be a dream? I was too weak to move,—my

hand trembled, so that I could not reach the bell,—but surely I heard a low, strange, unearthly laugh. It was horrible! but a moment afterwards Dixon appeared, and she says I was in a deep sleep, evidently dreaming some horrible dream!"

"It is impossible sometimes to distinguish between a dream and a reality, especially when we are ill," said Marion soothingly, for she was alarmed at the look of terror and perplexity with which Agnes mentioned these circumstances, and privately determined, as soon as possible, to communicate on the subject with Sir Patrick. "I must be allowed, Agnes, to sleep in your room to-night."

"Dixon maintains that this is all mere fatigue, after the excitement of Lady Towercliffe's, but I was never yet wearied with being flattered and admired! This morning, however, strange to say, my spirits are dreadfully depressed. Nothing gives me pleasure. I can scarcely imagine any earthly thing that could interest me. Though the ball turned out pleasanter than any ball ever was before, and Captain De Crespigny seemed, as usual,

the most lover-like of men, yet this morning, if he proposed to you, or even to Dixon, I should scarcely care. Every thing seems a blank. I feel a sort of depression and horror not to be described or imagined."

"I desired you, Dixon, to leave the room," exclaimed Marion, astonished to perceive her still lurking about the bed. "Go instantly," added Marion in a more peremptory tone, for there was something that terrified her in the woman's look. "What do you think, my dear Agnes, can be the cause of this very sudden illness? Did you eat any supper?"

"Nothing; I Jephsonized completely; tasted not a morsel, and drank still less! That good creature, Dixon, brought me a cup of tea from her own breakfast, on my return home, merely to lay the dust in my throat, but, *entre nous*, I tossed the greater part out of that window clandestinely, as it had an odd, disagreeable taste, like stuff-petticoats. Poor Dixon would be mortified if she knew what I thought of her 'delicious mixture' at, probably, 3s. 6d. the pound. It is a pleasure

to see any human being so attached as she is to me."

Marion's colour deepened at the tone of reproach in which these last words were spoken. It was impossible, she thought, that they could be seriously considered applicable to her, and yet both the look and accent seemed to say so, and the ready colour flushed her cheek when she felt that no attachment could have equalled her own, had she dared to express it either in word or deed.

As Agnes declined sending for a doctor, and seemed already better, though unable for more exertion, Marion took up a book, and remained silently by her side, watching, with anxious solicitude, every variation of her countenance, and, with affectionate ingenuity, anticipating all her many wants, the most troublesome of which appeared to be a craving and intolerable thirst.

After some time the door opened, and Dixon was about to enter with a tray containing Agnes' dinner, but on seeing Marion still there, she started and seemed about hastily to withdraw.

"Come in," said Marion, looking with astonishment at the abigail's countenance, which was flushed and inflamed, as if she had been intoxicated. "Come in."

"When Miss Dunbar is ill she always likes her dinner alone," said Dixon, pertly. "This is only a plain pudding, so I shall keep it warm below."

"My sister will not like it the less for my helping her," said Marion, affectionately turning to Agnes. "You may leave it with me, Dixon."

Marion was surprised to see the woman visibly change colour when she said this. The abigail instantly compressed her lips as if to prevent their quivering, fixed her wild glaring eyes on Agnes, and then gave an anxious glance at the dinner tray.

"This pudding seems excellent," continued Marion, helping Agnes; "but surely there is rather too much sugar scattered on the top! Sugar!" added Marion in accents of astonishment, when she had put it to her lips; "this is not sugar! stop, Agnes! stop! I charge you not to taste it!" exclaimed Marion,

hastily dashing the spoon out of her sister's hand, as she was raising it to her mouth. "What can this mean? There is something here I do not understand! It must be explained!"

Bewildered and amazed, Marion looked round, and beheld a dark scowl of rage and fear, like insanity itself, never afterwards to be forgotten, which disturbed the countenance of Dixon for a moment, and then she became of a livid unnatural whiteness, when, in a low subdued voice, she muttered,

"I know nothing about it; the cook seasons Miss Dunbar's dinner; if this is not to her taste, I can take it away!"

"Marion, what is the matter? I hate all this fuss; pray do not make a scene when I am so ill. Dixon manages for me without half this trouble. The pudding seems good enough."

Marion trembled visibly as she got up, but without saying another word she rang three times for the cook, who expressed the greatest astonishment when the pudding was

shewn to her, saying, in a tone of pique, as she supposed her skill was in question,

"I put none of that there powdering on; sure it be something very queer; neither sugar, salt, nor mustard! It would be of little use in a kitchen, with no taste! I declare," added she, suddenly changing colour, "to my thinking it be nothing better nor worse than arsenic!"

A stifled cry of astonishment and consternation escaped from Marion at these words, while she hurriedly exclaimed, "Stop Dixon; do not let Dixon leave the house! Send for an apothecary. Where is Patrick!"

The powder, on being analysed, proved, indeed, to be arsenic, which Dixon had bought the previous evening, on the usual pretext of poisoning rats; but while Marion was raising an alarm, the culprit herself absconded, carrying off all Agnes' trinkets and money, which she must previously have secreted, and notice of the robbery was immediately sent to the police. Among her valuable collection of jewellery, Agnes bestowed the most audible

lamentations on a splendid locket set in diamonds with her brother's hair, but her secret regrets were the deepest for a crystal scent-bottle with a gold top set in turquoises, which Captain De Crespigny had presented on the previous evening, pretending he had lost it to her in a bet.

"One would fancy," said Agnes, in her usual rallying tone, the first time she saw Captain De Crespigny after her recovery, "that Dixon had been some old admirer of yours! Not a vestige is left of any thing I ever received from you! The last year's annual which you gave me! the music you copied for me! even my withered bouquet of the night before! all gone at one fell swoop, leaving not a wreck behind!"

Captain De Crespigny coloured violently, and strode to the window in evident confusion, which Marion could not but remark with astonishment and perplexity; but Agnes, quite unconscious of his agitation, rattled on with increasing animation.

"I always now put my money and every-h ing valuable in the most conspicuous part

of my room, to save anybody the trouble of murdering me for them. I have a perfect horror of being murdered! It never occurred to me, however, that the treasures which for certain reasons I value most, were in any danger, being of no intrinsic value to other people,—I really would have died in defence of my little scent-bottle."

Captain De Crespigny had recourse now to the poker, an inestimable refuge in all cases where the concealment of emotion is an object, as his heightened colour could excite no reasonable surprise, after the exertion of lifting it, and the noise he made afterwards seemed equivalent to a reply.

"It was, after all, a most terrifying escape!" continued Agnes, rather delighted than otherwise with the importance she had acquired by this adventure, and holding it up continually in every light that she could. "That horrid Dixon! she always had a half-crazed look! You must remember my telling you so, Marion?"

"I remember perfectly it was I who said so to you!" replied her sister, laughing.

"Ah! that is exactly the same thing!"

"Not in the least!" persisted Marion, good-humouredly smiling. "All great discoveries occasion disputes respecting the originators. Watt and Bell about steam, and you and I about this poisoning affair!"

"Well! it was very clever of you, Marion! I shall do as much for you another time! That ungrateful creature! The arsenic would probably at the very least have spoiled my teeth, and perhaps made my hair grow grey! That I never could have survived!"

"The strangest thing of all is that there seems to have been so much malice in the whole business," continued Marion. "She might easily have carried off all the plate, or Patrick's gold dressing-case! What could ail Dixon at you, Agnes? You were kindness itself to her!"

"This is an odd world, and very remarkable things happen in it," observed Sir Patrick, with a yawn. "But you may talk till you are both in your coffins, without making anything new of this business. Your affair has been the wonder of the house for two entire

days, Agnes, without a single new fact having come out, and there is De Crespigny strolled into the garden to escape being wearied to death. I really think two days long enough to discuss any one subject, and the less you annoy yourselves about it the better. If the culprit is above ground, the police will ferret her out; and my advice to you both is, to eat your puddings for the next month without sugar!"

Agnes assumed a look of majestic ire at this very cavalier allusion to her adventure, and threw herself back in her arm-chair, with an exceedingly ill-used aspect, heaving a succession of indignant sighs, which, continued most provokingly unnoticed, till they amounted at last almost to groans of suppressed anger, while Sir Patrick, taking up the "Times," concluded, by saying in a tone of careless, absent indifference,

"One has no leisure now to be happy and sorry about every thing that occurs! I remember once seeing a very impudent, forward-looking actress perform Juliet at Covent Garden, when De Crespigny whispered to me in his droll way, 'Depend upon it, this is not

the first lover whom that young lady has met on a balcony!' and you may depend upon it, Agnes, this is not the first poisoning experiment your abigail has attempted: I hope she will never try her skill on me! What would you say if she were to administer a dose of zinc some day, and turn you blue! I often wonder that no jealous woman ever wreaked her vengeance in that way! It would be a capital joke!"

Agnes had been greatly flattered, and if any attention to herself could have surprised her, she might have been astonished at the intense interest almost inadvertently betrayed by Captain De Crespigny, in the mysterious circumstances of her lately discovered danger. When the particulars were first mentioned, he turned as pale as death, and asked with startling eagerness, for a minute description of the abigail's appearance, to which he listened with almost breathless attention. From that moment he became indefatigable in his efforts to trace out the fugitive, in which he seemed most truly and heartily in earnest, writing advertisements himself for the news-

papers, to offer a reward for her apprehension, and never seeming to tire of hearing all that could be remembered or related, respecting the period of her being first engaged by Agnes, her dress, manner, age, and appearance, while his colour varied visibly from red to pale several times during the narration.

"It is altogether most flattering to me!" observed Agnes next day, when pointing all this out to Sir Patrick. "Captain De Crespigny has been sometimes most maliciously accused of insincerity towards young ladies; but when he is in earnest, you see how very much in earnest he is! It would be impossible for him to be more deeply interested and agitated on the occasion, if his own life, instead of mine, had been endangered. I wish every body else had shown as much feeling!" added she, glancing angrily at Sir Patrick, who was carelessly whistling a tune, and beating time with a riding whip on his boot. "Well! exclaimed Agnes, getting more and more irritated, "if I did not see that one person at least cares more for me in the world than you do, I would be ready yet,

without giving Dixon the trouble, to poison myself! I would spend my last shilling on a dose of arsenic!"

"I am not sure that poisoning in such a case would be the best plan!" replied Sir Patrick, describing circles on the carpet with his whip, and speaking in a tone of most provoking *nonchalance*. "In the first place, if people are so very indifferent, it might be no great punishment to them; and besides, I do not exactly see how poisoning would improve your own prospects, either in this world or the next! In respect to my friend De Crespigny, it is quite a catch for any idle man like him, when something occurs that he can be interested in, for he was dying of too much leisure; but as for his ever falling seriously in love with any young lady in the creation, let me warn you, Agnes, once for all, that there cannot be a more hopeless hope invented or dreamed of."

CHAPTER III.

I'd preach as though I ne'er should preach again,
I'd preach as dying unto dying men.

Marion found it more and more difficult every day, to account for the bitter, angry contempt with which Agnes spoke of Clara Granville, her dislike to whom never seemed for an hour to lie dormant, as she was perpetually making allusions to her, which caused very frequent irritation between herself and Sir Patrick, who sometimes angrily left the room, and yet occasionally joined in her invectives against the whole Granville family, in a tone of reckless, angry derision, which was to Marion completely perplexing and unaccountable. If Agnes felt dull or out of

spirits, she complained of being excessively Granville-ish; or if Sir Patrick were observed for a wonder, in any single instance, to economise, she called him a Granville-ist; but if her brother either laughed, or flung himself out of the room, according to the humour he was in, it was a fit of Granville-ism; and Marion became surprised to perceive that the mention of that name was never, even by chance, like that of any other name, a subject of indifference; and conscious that some secret was connected with it, not imparted to her, she carefully avoided all allusion to Clara.

Agnes one day jestingly announced to Sir Patrick, that the Granvilles had taken out perpetual tickets at the Charitable Soup-kitchen, and meant to dine there every day on broth; and the next morning she rather inconsistently found fault with them, because at least twenty poor people assembled at their lodgings every day, to be fed, as if it were a House of Refuge.

Marion observed that all the innumerable books for charitable subscriptions, which were

circulated from door to door, Agnes liked to examine, for the gossiping amusement of ascertaining how much was given by each of her friends, though never for the purpose of adding her own name, as her purse was a complete valetudinarian, always complaining of exhaustion, yet always capable of any exertion dictated by inclination; and Sir Patrick also, though he generally swore an impatient oath or two, when he saw the succession of dingy-looking books brought into the drawing-room, sometimes amused himself with a supercilious glance at the contents.

Whenever the object was judicious, the Reverend Richard Granville's name, and that of his sister, appeared for a small sum, such as they might be able to afford; and Marion felt convinced there was much single-hearted goodness, and courageous disregard of mere appearances, when beneath the pompous L.5, 5s., of Lady Towercliffe, she saw the modest unobtrusive ten shillings, or half-a-crown of Miss Granville. It was probably all Clara could give, and she did not feel ashamed to proclaim the very small amount, though Ag-

nes, like most persons who are mean themselves, in respect to giving, was splendid in her notions for others, and exclaimed outrageously against the absurdity of bestowing a paltry trifle at all.

"Five shillings to the Infirmary! did ever anybody hear such nonsense! as if an Infirmary could be supported on five shillings! It is so like Clara Granville's trumpery ideas! I daresay she thought the fortune of the institution made by such a donation! It will scarcely buy a packet of James' powders for one of the invalids!"

"But when Clara spares five shillings, are we to give nothing!" asked Marion, seeing Sir Patrick's pompous butler, as usual, carrying away the book untouched.

"Better give nothing than make ourselves ridiculous, like the Granvilles. Nobody will guess that this book was brought here! I wish Clara had given her superfluous money towards the better equipment of their own one solitary man-servant,—the merest attempt at a footman I ever beheld, with such a lodging-house look! Like the waiter from

some second-rate inn ! Did you ever see anything so ugly, and out of taste, as that little yellow cottage of the Granvilles', standing close to the old palace, like a kippered salmon nailed to the wall !"

An angry flush burned upon the cheek of Sir Patrick, who did not trust his temper with a reply to Agnes' tirade ; and Marion hastily withdrew her eyes from his countenance, on perceiving that he had bit his lip till the blood seemed ready to spring, while his eyes flashed fire. In a moment afterwards, he whistled half a tune, threw open the window, and finally hurried out of the room, while Agnes looked mysteriously at Marion, and said nothing, though the expression of her eye plainly told that something was wrong.

Sir Patrick never entered a church ; but Sunday being a day of impunity, when he might go to his club, and become a gentleman-at-large, without the possibility of being arrested, he invited a weekly supper party to meet him at Douglas' Hotel, every Saturday night, punctually at twelve o'clock, which

held together till so late an hour on Sunday mornings, that once having carried a candle to the door, when letting out Captain De Crespigny, the day-light flashed in upon them, and they saw the congregations passing along every street to church.

Sir Patrick's life had now become one continual subterfuge. "*Il jurait bien, mais il payait mal;*" and he was heard frequently to declare, that he could not but fancy it might be, to an old experienced fox, a great amusement, when he afforded a good day's hunting to sportsmen, from the strange delight he felt himself in baffling duns and teasing bailiffs. He cared for nothing, not even for his debts and creditors, but over-reached everybody, paid nobody, and treated all mankind in different styles of insolence; but his favourite diversion was, nearly to out-stay the hour of twelve on Sunday night, knowing that his ill-treated creditors had offered a reward of L.500 for his capture, and that the whole way along the High Street, emissaries were ambuscaded, in the eager hope that some fortunate night the clock might strike Monday

morning before he was safely sheltered within the sanctuary.

Once Sir Patrick had indeed lingered several minutes too late; and when he approached the ditch, forming a line of demarcation between the debtor's refuge and the world in general, a rope was drawn completely across the street, while two men like constables, in large loose duffle coats, and hats slouched over their faces, had taken their station, each holding it resolutely at opposite ends, in the certain expectation of entrapping him, though the courage of both seemed for a moment to waver, when they saw the tall, well-knit, and finely-proportioned figure of Sir Patrick, as he strode onwards, with his usual military bearing and commanding aspect. After exchanging a look, however, they tightened the rope, and were about, with a rapid manœuvre, to coil it round him, when Sir Patrick, seeing their intention, rushed forward on the nearest, and levelled him to the ground with a single blow, saying, "You dastardly rascals! do you suppose that a dozen such fellows could be a match for any gentleman?"

" I'm a better gen'leman than you, Sir!" said the other, in an insolent blustering tone. " Every guinea in your pocket, Sir, there's ten men in the world have a better right to than you have! I think a gen'leman born means a gen'leman as pays his debts!"

" Then here is what I owe to you!" replied Sir Patrick, flinging him almost across the street, with a violent blow on the head. " Only dare to stand in my way again, and every joint or bone in that miserable carcass of yours shall be fit for the surgeons. I intend to keep this rope till the day you are hanged!"

Agnes made her Sundays literally a day of rest, by remaining most of the morning in bed, to recover the fatigues of the previous week; and even in the afternoon, a " Sunday shower" often kept her at home. She had been taught at Mrs Penfold's, to consider the most superficial attention to religion as being little short of angelic, and to believe, that the utmost extreme of rational devotion, if she wished to be inordinately pious, would consist in going once every Sunday to a pew in some

fashionable chapel, where the stream of the preacher's eloquence might be permitted to flow in at one ear, and out at the other, without there being any occasion for her to analyse or understand what he said, satisfied that her duty was more than done by appearing there at all—besides which, she occasionally read prayers at home, in a careless mechanical way, which was anything but praying—she had a magnificently bound Bible on her toilette, more for ornament than use—she wore all her new dresses for the first time at chapel, dined on roast beef every Sunday, and spent the evening in writing letters or in reading, or rather in sleeping over some volume of religious poetry or tales—what Sir Patrick laughingly called "a half-good book."

Both Agnes and her brother spoke with unmitigated and indiscriminating reprobation of Methodists, Roman Catholics, Unitarians, Independents, or any other sect of whom they knew the name, because, having always belonged nominally to an orthodox chapel, they considered it a matter of course, when thinking about the matter at all, that they must

be orthodox too; though, if Agnes had been obliged to give a summary of her own doctrines, it would have been a confused medley, containing many of the heresies she reprobated by name, without knowing their nature. Thus sailing down on the stream of her own inclinations, without effort or reflection, Agnes would have been indignant and astonished beyond measure to be told, that she was not performing in a most commendable manner "The Whole Duty of Man," or at least more than the whole duty of woman, while she looked upon all those who evinced a greater reverence for religion as mean hypocrites or fanatical enthusiasts—being very much of opinion with the divine, who said that orthodox meant his own opinion, and paradox other people's.

Marion silently, and very unobtrusively, pursued the even tenor of her own way, with that deep and ardent devotion of spirit which had first been awakened to life by the happy instrumentality of Clara, whose apparent estrangement from her family now she deeply deplored, while many an anxious conjecture

frequently crossed her mind, whether she, along with her brother and Agnes, must share in that alienation, which she could neither fully understand, nor in any degree diminish; and on the Sunday morning after her arrival at St John's Lodge, before setting out for chapel, she had been surprised and mortified to observe, that Agnes's occupation in bed consisted in tearing up, to make matches, a numerous collection of notes from Miss Granville, all containing apologies for not accepting various invitations to St John's Lodge. "What can this all mean?" thought Marion, in agitated perplexity, as she pursued her way to chapel. "It is very unlike Clara to be so repulsive! and equally unlike Agnes to be importunate! I fear something is greatly wrong; but Clara is too just and too good to mingle me in any quarrel of which I do not so much as know the cause. When we meet I shall at once ask Clara for an explanation. We must all yet be reconciled and happy, as in former days."

There is nothing which extravagant people grudge so much as paying for a pew in church;

and those often who squander money upon everything else, meanly evade subscribing this just and necessary tribute for the maintenance of religion and good order in society. It is astonishing how many who pay their way with lavish liberality during the interval to concerts and balls, will stand, week after week, like paupers, in a chapel-aisle, begging for a seat, rather than hire one for the season; and on this occasion Marion, finding that neither Sir Patrick nor Agnes had ever imagined any necessity for providing themselves with a local habitation of their own, followed a stream of people into chapel, and stood for some time near the door, in that most awkward and conspicuous of all situations, waiting for the chance of being shewn into a seat by some compassionate pew-opener.

The street had been crowded with a dense mass of carriages, while Marion felt almost bewildered by the loud crash of equipages driving up and driving off, breaking the line, and backing out, as if they had been assembled on the benefit night of some popular actor, while a flood of pedestrians crowded

along the foot-path, as if their lives depended on being first. She was astonished also at the unprecedented concourse of people already assembled in chapel, with looks of eager excitement and flushed expectation. Every aisle appeared filled to excess, and the staircase seemed one solid mosaic of faces, while the congregation were all crushing, elbowing, and pushing forward, in impatient haste. Voices were heard, at length, speaking aloud, in angry contention, for places—a sound which grated strangely and startlingly on the ear in a sacred edifice; and when at length the heat became unbearably intense, a loud crash was heard, of persons breaking the window for air.

Marion, intimidated at having ventured alone into so dense a crowd, and at a loss to guess what could occasion so much excitement, would have made her way out; but the pressure behind rendered it as impossible to retreat as to advance. On few occasions do people betray so great a want of kind consideration, and even of hospitality, as when comfortably ensconced in an extensive

pew at church, occupying room enough for three or four others, and carelessly staring at those who are vainly waiting, with hesitation and confusion such as Marion's, in hopes of being obligingly accommodated with a place. Her colour deepening every moment, and her veil drawn closer, Marion shrank from notice, while one person after another elbowed his way forward, and closed the door of his pew, with the authoritative, self-satisfied air of a proprietor, heedless how others might be situated; and still Marion anxiously glanced around her in vain, for the obscurest nook in which to subside unseen.

At length, when the first loud peal of the organ had sent forth its solemn tones, summoning every heart to devout attention, Marion felt a gentle touch given to her arm, and on looking round, her hand was clasped for a moment with a look of heartfelt affection by Clara Granville, who silently led her to the seat, at some distance, from which she had followed her, and giving one more affectionate pressure of the hand to Marion, she composed herself into a look of devout and fer-

vent attention, forgetful evidently of all but the important services of the hour, while Marion's heart beat with rapture to find herself once more beside her most beloved friend, and that friend unchanged.

The prayers were not merely read, but prayed,—not in the every-day, matter-of-course tone, so common in the pulpit, nor in a pompous, self-sufficient, commanding voice, but with deep thrilling solemnity, and in a manner calm, graceful, and dignified, by a young clergyman of most intelligent and serious aspect, who evidently felt all he said, and became so utterly absorbed in his duty, that it appeared as if he almost imagined himself alone, and visibly present with the Divine Being whom he addressed.

The young preacher's appearance was singularly striking and prepossessing. His dark Spanish-looking complexion, and rather foreign features, were animated by an expression of the brightest intelligence, while in his eye might be traced the calm dignity of a highly-cultivated intellect, and the benevolence of a Christian who hoped all things and

believed all things, judging others as he would himself be judged. In preaching, he avoided the arena of controversy, but his arguments were clear and comprehensive, his eloquence irresistible, as much by the fire and splendour of his genius, as by the depth and solemnity of his reflections, while the attention was enthralled, the judgment convinced, the heart awakened, and the inward feelings touched in their most secret recesses. Without a thought of affectation, he was simple, dignified, full of earnestness, self-conviction, and fervent devotion, while there were passages of grandeur when he alluded to the solemn mysteries, and higher truths of revelation, which might have made a mere philosopher feel as if the wing of his imagination had been broken in attempting to follow; and yet there were thoughts and illustrations so clear and comprehensible, that any ignorant child from a charity school might have understood them.

Amidst the brighter scintillations of his genius, it was evident that he understood the whole alchymy of human nature, and while almost insensibly revealing the magnificent

proportions of his own mind, he understood and sympathised with all the trials, temptations, and sorrows of human nature, and considered the whole art of happiness for man to consist in unreserved and heartfelt submission of his own will, his own hopes, wishes, and affections to the will of his Maker, desiring to have nothing, to be nothing, to do nothing, and to expect nothing, but according to His wise and holy decrees,—to let the stream of events run on, seeking to extract the best happiness from them as they occurred, without one rebellious wish that they had been otherwise, but only with a fervent prayer that they may, and a firm belief that they shall, carry him forward, though the course be rough and perilous, to a calm bright haven of ceaseless and unutterable joy.

When the congregation had dispersed with a degree of silence and solemnity, very different from their noisy and irreverent entrance, Marion walked for some time, leaning on the arm of Miss Granville, but so entranced, that she was unable yet to break the chain which had carried her mind and feelings captive to

another and a better world. She had never before felt so deeply impressed with the transitory nature of all around her, the insignificance of those joys and sorrows with which she was encompassed, and it seemed to her but a day or an hour, till the curtain of eternity should rise, and the glories of a great hereafter become visible to her sight.

"You have been deeply interested by all we have heard?" said Clara, in an accent of gentle interrogation, but with an expression of peculiar meaning in her countenance, which Marion was at a loss how exactly to interpret.

"Interested!" exclaimed Marion, with youthful enthusiasm. "If all the sermons I ever heard were compressed into one, they could scarcely equal what has been said today!"

"Do you remember the preacher?" asked Clara, colouring and smiling. "But no! how could that be possible, when you never met before! Here he comes! Allow me to introduce you, then, to my very dear brother Richard. You know each other already,

by the description of one who loves you both !"

Mr Granville advanced to Marion with frank and prepossessing kindness, but though his manner was most ingratiating, his countenance wore an expression of pre-occupation and fatigue, while he walked hurriedly past, after cordially shaking Marion by the hand, who observed to Clara with surprise, that his hand felt as cold as ice.

" That is always the case with Richard after preaching," replied Miss Granville. " The solemn feeling of responsibility which he has, on entering the pulpit, often agitates and overawes him to a degree you would scarcely credit. The extravagant enthusiasm with which he has lately been followed, makes him still more anxious to use rightly while it lasts, his influence with others, though, as he says, nothing is so transient in this transitory world, as the popularity of a preacher, and his chief solicitude, is to remind men that it is the word preached, and not the preacher, which they are come to hear, and always to preserve the simplicity of his own mind,

unadulterated by any inordinate wish for applause."

"I am sure his words and thoughts have all the force of genuine feeling," said Marion, earnestly. "He preaches from heart to heart, which is the only way to strike a light between them. It seemed to-day, as if he were steering us through an ocean of immeasurable thought!"

"But," replied Clara, "Richard is deeply impressed with the danger to a preacher himself, arising from the adulation with which he is followed by crowds in search of novelty, who give that respect to the mere ambassador delivering his message, which he wishes to claim solely and entirely for his Divine Master. He quoted to me yesterday a quaint old author, who says that God humbles men in this life, that He may exalt them for ever; but Satan exalts men in this life, that he may cast them down for eternity. It is a solemn truth, and Richard feels the danger as he ought."

"Then it is a danger no longer, if seen and rightly avoided," replied Marion. "He al-

ready lives, I have heard, in a better world, while he acts in this, but so much applause must be apt sometimes to draw down your brother's thoughts from heaven to earth, if he hears all that is said and thought. Lady Towercliffe remarked, as we came out, that his eloquence does him immortal honour."

"Yes! as Richard himself once observed, 'immortal honour for twenty-four hours, or perhaps a week;' but that is no object of legitimate ambition to a preacher of immortality. My brother is blessed with one Christian attainment almost in perfection, and that is, an actual dread of worldly applause. No penny trumpet could be more insignificant in his estimation, than the enthusiasm of a few excitable young ladies, and I have seen him often carefully avoiding those, who would be 'frothing him,' as he calls it, with preposterous praise. He compares popularity to the sails of a windmill, raised to the clouds one minute, and down below zero the next; but fashionable notoriety has no attraction for one who aims at real usefulness. If he did not despise it, he would despise himself.

He is engrossed with the fervent, heartfelt hope of doing good according to his opportunity, and in perfect simplicity performing his duty to God and man!"

"How mean and low in comparison do those appear who are living only for the opinions of men, and the trumpery tinsel of this world, yet how difficult it must be to rise above earthly ambition," said Marion. "No patent of nobility could confer half the distinction on your brother that he enjoyed to-day, surrounded by a multitude all roused to enthusiasm by his words. A mere author writes in solitude, and never knows the full influence of what he has written, but an orator reaps an immediate harvest of honour, and sees it before his eyes, which must be ten thousand times more apt to intoxicate him with success."

"Yes," replied Clara, "no enthusiasm can rival what is felt at the moment for a popular preacher! His eloquence rouses feelings stronger than any in nature, while men become conscious that it would be their highest honour and best safety to encourage such

thoughts as he suggests. You would smile sometimes to see how Richard's steps are beset, as he leaves the chapel, by crowds anxious to catch a glimpse of his countenance, to request an introduction, to express their warmest thanks, to entreat he will print his last sermon, or to beg for an autograph."

"It is taking pains to destroy what they most admire, when people throw such temptations to vanity in a clergyman's way," said Marion. "Even I could not but perceive as he passed, the reverential glances, and the whispered announcement of his name on every side as he hurried onward, looking neither to the right hand nor to the left; but he sets an example of what he teaches, to live for high and holy purposes. It is only by carrying a light himself, that a clergyman can give light to others.

"Yes, Marion! it was not in mere words of course, or of sacrilegious presumption that Richard declared, on being ordained, his own solemn conviction that he was specially called to be a minister of the church. Unlike the Jews who had Christ in their Bibles, but not

in their hearts, his whole spirit was imbued with the pure holy faith and morality of the everlasting gospel, and he considered it the highest of earthly honours, to be consecrated for that solemn office."

"I was often told formerly," said Marion, "that your brother had talents which would have raised him to eminence,—or rather to pre-eminence,—at the bar, and in the House of Commons,—or, as Pat always said, meaning the greatest compliment of all,—on the stage; but dear Clara, how different, and how greatly superior, to feel, as he must do, with an approving conscience, that all his abilities, time, and strength, are consecrated to an object, which his heart, without one momentary feeling of doubt, or self-reproach, may delight in—that all his studies, duties, and occupations increase his own fitness to be happy for ever, while, at the same time, they are for the good of all mankind, and for the glory of God. Your brother most truly said to-day, that a sinner is 'the drudge of Satan,' but if there be real greatness upon earth, I think it is that of an honoured and useful minister in the

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Church of Christ, whose character is modelled upon the Holy Scriptures, as some insects take their hue from the leaf on which they feed."

"True, Marion! Richard's profession is indeed, in the way he fulfils it, 'twice bless'd,' as a means of both giving and receiving happiness. It is with him a labour of love, in which every duty is a pleasure, and his object is, to keep us in mind of our individual importance in being believers, for as the glory of the sun is reflected in a single drop of dew, so may the character of Christ be represented in that of the humblest Christian; and, like a stone in an arch, each atom has a place to fill, which must be conscientiously kept, whether more or less important and conspicuous, with unswerving steadiness, for in no other can it be so advantageously situated."

"I am entirely convinced of that," said Marion. "As your brother said to-day, Christians must never feel themselves raised above the homely duties of every-day life, nor give mere moralists occasion to say that their faith is not evidenced by their works."

"No," replied Clara, "let the ravens croak, while the eagle pursues his steady flight towards the sun, heedless of all but his high destination. Yet, as Richard says, Christian mothers should instruct their own children, wives should find their first earthly duty in associating with their husbands, the heads of houses should watch conscientiously over the belief and conduct of their servants, a clergyman's vocation is within his own parish, and every family should be a little kingdom in itself, ruled and governed by the law and the gospel of Christ, so that, as benighted wanderers in the dark are often cheered and guided by seeing, as they hurry onwards, the light and warmth gleaming around the hearth of a stranger, the sinner also, in his dark and dreary course, when he beholds a passing glimpse of that peace and joy which are to be found in a Christian household, and there only, might be tempted and encouraged to go home and do likewise.

"I wish it were so oftener," said Marion, while her thoughts reverted sorrowfully to St John's Lodge."

" It is in speaking with single-hearted simplicity of home-duties and home-affections, that Richard always excels himself," continued Clara, warmly. " There he preaches as he practises, for he cultivates happiness to diffuse it all around him, and he is, in reality, all that other men wish to appear. He deprecates, in general, pulpit oratory, as men are so often apt to mistake mere excited feeling for true devotion, and he considers that attention in church as most to be depended on, which does not require to be pampered with novelty. Eloquence has often been perverted to such evil purposes, both moral and political, that Richard sometimes tells me, he thinks, on the whole, this world would have been a better world without oratory at all, because brilliant talents and enthusiastic tempers usurp so often the place due only to principle.

" It often occurs to me," said Marion, " that half the actual history of our own lives is unknown to us now, but will probably be revealed hereafter;—in what respect, for instance, our circumstances in life would have been altered, had we on various occasions acted differently—

how near we may have been to meeting with great events which never actually occurred—what impression has been made on others by our conduct and actions—who really loved us, and what is the extent of good or evil which our conversation or our writings may have done in the world. To your brother how many interesting discoveries would such a revelation probably disclose!"

"Richard's own endeavour is generally to maintain a calm, rational, and argumentative style of reasoning with his congregation, and yet he is carried away irresistibly by his feelings, sometimes into such a burst of eloquence as we heard to-day," added Clara, "you would sometimes fancy, even in conversation, that Richard's mind, like some great volcano, was undergoing an overwhelming eruption, while he pours forth in resistless torrents, the burning lava of his thoughts and feelings."

Marion listened with increasing interest to Clara's remarks, and watched with affectionate sympathy, the kindling brightness of her friend's expressive eyes when she spoke of that brother so tenderly beloved, and so unspeak-

ably respected, of whom, from his earliest boyhood, she had heard nothing but praise, for none had ever measured the stature of his mind without finding it higher than they anticipated. Marion felt an unenvying happiness in the happiness of Clara, and yet a tear suddenly started into her eyes, and a pang of unutterable sorrow struck upon her heart when she reflected, that, not many years ago, her own brother, Patrick, had been the friend and companion of this highly-gifted man, but that now they were friends no more, and becoming every day less suited to be companions.

CHAPTER III.

For when the vanities of life's brief day
Oblivion's hurrying wing shall sweep away,
Each act by charity and mercy done,
High o'er the wrecks of time shall live alone,
Immortal as the heavens, and beauteous bloom,
To other worlds, and realms beyond the tomb.

BOWLES.

FROM that memorable Sunday when Marion first renewed her friendship and intimacy with Clara, her fair young countenance brightened into its sunniest smiles, while day after day she carried her work to the little "cottage of contentment," where Clara generally received her in what she called her summer drawing-room, a small bowling-green in the garden, bright and shining as an emerald, beneath a

grove of overhanging lilacs and laburnums. There Mr Granville frequently brought out books, which he read aloud and discussed, developing the lofty aspirations of a mind fitted to be high among the highest in learning and intellect, while his thoughts were like a well-tuned instrument, from which every chord sounded to the praise of their Divine maker, and his conversation was, as Pascal said of the Holy Scriptures, even more addressed to the heart than to the head.

When reading aloud, Mr Granville evinced so much interest, with so quick a consciousness of the author's meaning, and so true a sympathy in his sentiments, that it seemed as if he must himself have composed every line; and when he occasionally lent Marion any volume that she particularly liked, she found his favourite passages marked, and the margins enriched by so many interesting notes, that she followed with delight the course of his mind, while at the same time storing her own memory with high thoughts and refined sentiments.

There was a degree of soul and spirit in the

countenance of Mr Granville, which marked him as no ordinary man, and an indefinite charm in his grave and courteous manner, suited to his holy profession, and displaying the calmness and polish of one accustomed to good society. He had an energy of expression irresistibly influential, while illustrating with an eloquence peculiarly his own, all the highest and holiest principles which can occupy the human heart. His master mind conversed of Milton, Spenser, Cowper, Montgomery, and of all the pious authors dear to every lover of nature and of highly-wrought genius and devotion, while the most phlegmatic must have been roused, and the most passionate become subdued, by the indisputable dominion of a great mind, for his genius appeared to look upon the trifles of existence with the passing glance of an eagle in its lofty ascent.

Marion and Clara were often entertained by Mr Granville, when he related characteristic anecdotes of pious and literary men with whom he had associated, enlivened by original remarks, shewing strong powers of observa-

tion, and displaying the best side of human life; yet his wit and humour were evidently chastened and subdued by a thoughtful estimate of existence, and by a continual consciousness of his high vocation, while Marion scarcely knew whether to be most astonished at the versatility of his talents, or at the extent of his information. No subject seemed strange to him, no country unknown, no science unstudied, no book unread,—while with ready memory and practised judgment he spoke as he thought, betraying no reserve or affectation; and religion still, like a golden thread, was to be traced running through his whole conversation.

Marion's was a heart which required something in those she loved to reverence and look up to; but here she had found that in its fullest measure, and under the happiest auspices, among friends with whom she never spent an hour without feeling the happier and the better for it. Now for the first time she discovered that there is an aristocracy of conversation, which avoids everything low or mean in its origin, while a new world of ideas

opened upon her, in listening to sentiments of high honour, and to feelings of universal benevolence. The genius of Agnes for conversation lay only in the line of scandal, and she was in the habit of sweeping away characters like cobwebs, at a single stroke, by remarks full of flippancy, and often using her talents as a mimic, while with tricks almost amounting to buffoonery, she rendered the best and most estimable of her friends, though above the reach of censure, at all events ridiculous. Ill-nature was to her conversation what fuel is to the flame; and Agnes piqued herself on her penetration in discovering the motive of others for all they did, while invariably tracing it to something mean or contemptible; but with Richard and Clara an equal ingenuity was shewn in tracing it to good; and while in the one house every individual discussed was brought down to the same level of absurdity or selfishness, it was cheering and gratifying to a heart like Marion's, that at Mr Granville's, the characters and feelings of every one living were respected and elevated.

At St John's Lodge, when Marion heard Sir Patrick and Agnes discuss their acquaintances,' she could not but wonder sometimes where all good or commendable people had hid themselves, as it seemed as if they must have fled from the face of man, or have closed their hearts in disgust from all association with the mean and paltry world of fashion and frivolity; but now at last she had discovered some whom malice itself could scarcely criticise; and in thus associating intimately with the "excellent of the earth," she felt an increasing ambition to resemble them.

None were more fitted than Clara and Richard to appreciate the single-hearted excellence of Marion's disposition, her utter disregardlessness of self, her anxious desire to please, her gay spirits, brilliant without effort, her heart generous without guile, and her thoughts fresh and unsophisticated as the gentle summer-breeze from the mountains. No one could look at Marion, and not wish to be her friend.

There was a tone of frank and entire confidence in her manner, which instantly gained

that of others in return—a softened sensibility in her expression—a deep fascination in her smile—and in her voice a tone of joyous hilarity, indicative of her sunny mind, though, like her countenance, it was capable of intense expression, and deepened sometimes, now, into a tone of reflection and feeling beyond her years, while before long it appeared evident, in Clara's opinion, that she had become all and everything in this world to Richard, and Richard to her—that her amiable, single-hearted *naïveté* of disposition, had at once carried all the outworks of Mr Granville's affection, and that already she was established not only in his friendship, but in something more.

Unsuspicious of Mr Granville's increasing preference, Marion smiled and talked in his society with unembarrassed vivacity, or in their graver moods replied to his remarks as she might have done to those of any aged clergyman. The perfect harmony of their tastes, and the sympathy of their feelings. produced that gradual communion of thought which is the essence of friendship, while heart

answered to heart, as if each had a telegraph instantaneously to reveal all that passed within. The highest qualities of Mr Granville's mind, as well as the deepest feelings of his nature, were brought into visible exercise, while he who had hitherto lived only for others, now felt that there was not a link in the chain of human sympathies and affections which had not become sacred and dear to himself. There was even something that might be considered romantic in his feelings—a poetry of the heart, which led him to believe, that a refined and sanctified love, such as men read and write of, but seldom feel, might yet exist on the earth—such love as could survive the lapse of time, the withering influence of prosperity, the chilling blast of adversity, and the growing infirmities of age, till at length, nourished and perfected by every vicissitude of sunshine and storm, it should be transplanted in renewed holiness and beauty to another and a better world.

Marion's character was rapidly matured and developed by her intercourse with Mr Granville, who raised in her ardent mind the

most enthusiastic interest; and while with timid pleasure, but increasing confidence, she joined in the conversation, her voice dwelt on his ear long after she ceased to speak, her looks were imprinted on his memory in his most solitary hours, and to Marion a new degree of interest and of happiness had suddenly become known, when with a vivid blush, and a beaming smile of pleased emotion, day after day, she thought over all that had passed, though ignorant yet of the extent to which her heart and feelings were already engaged. How much of life's most interesting emotions now passed through her mind during a few weeks, the heart of Marion alone could testify; while the attachment of Mr Granville was concealed from common observation, to be only the more ardently testified towards herself; and their happiness being the result of no precipitate impulse, they became attracted together by that love of excellence, which is the only permanent source of mutual attachment.

Marion's mind had always a propensity to admire, and whether in nature or in art, she

found it more congenial to her feelings ever to seek for beauties rather than defects, therefore now she was delighted to associate with one who not only appreciated everything as she did, but pointed out unexpected excellencies in all the objects of animated nature, in all the books she read, and even in many of the companions with whom she associated. With Richard and Clara she first visited the abodes of poverty; and in attending to the sufferings and sorrows of others, she saw that Miss Granville found the best relief from a depression of spirits, under which, Marion could not but see with surprise and regret, that her friend had recently suffered. Clara's piety was testified in deeds much more than in words, for good actions she evidently considered as the necessary embellishments of that holy faith which alone can render any mortal acceptable in the eyes of his Divine Maker, while salvation by the cross of Christ is the pivot on which all depends,—the crowning stone to the arch, giving stability and grace to the whole fabric of Christian hope.

Miss Granville gave not only her time and money, but her feelings and sympathies to the poor, while it evidently cheered her very heart when she could do a kind action, and though ever ready, heartily and gratefully, to acknowledge the Divine goodness to herself, whether in joy or in sorrow, yet nothing appeared so keenly to stir up her gratitude as any opportunity allowed her of doing a benevolent or a friendly action, as she considered that the knowledge of religion, without active exertion, testifying our love to God by our love to our fellow-creatures, was worse than useless. "The most depraved of sinners," as Mr Granville said, "could repeat the creed, but a Christian only can believe and follow it like Clara."

> Graceful and useful in all she does,
> Blessing and blest where'er she goes.

Marion, on returning one day over the hills and through the fields, with Mr Granville and Clara, from a tour of interesting visits to the abodes of chilling poverty and agonised wretchedness, such as she had never even

imagined, could not but contrast the smiling aspect of nature in all the sunny joy and verdure of spring, with the mournful lot of man as she had so recently witnessed it.

"How strange," said she, "to take a bird's-eye view, as we do this evening, of that great city, all glittering in sunshine, and every window illuminated with a flood of light, as if nothing but festivity and joy were there, and yet to know what a world of anxiety, and fear, and pain, and sorrow are all fermenting within its walls! Silent as the whole scene appears, yet, for every window we can look upon, there is probably some living being full of schemes, hopes, and fevered wishes, dissatisfied with his own lot, and envying that of another! What an awful world this is to be born into, when, amidst its many pleasures and its many beauties, we yet consider all its solemn responsibilities and fearful trials!"

"Yes," replied Mr Granville, in that voice, the deep melody of which was like no other voice, "we are placed here in a great theatre, and while, as interested spectators, we admire the decorations, let us remember, in

respect to the actors, that nothing is either ours or theirs, but each has his part to perform for which he is responsible, and all shall then be swept away to take an abiding place, according as we are fitted for it, in that real and unchangeable scene for which here we are only rehearsing our parts. If actors on the stage were to become actually and permanently for life, the great characters they represent, provided only they supported the part well for a night, the stake would be nothing in proportion to what a Christian shall gain, if grace be given him to fulfil his allotted part in this short and transitory life, which is but a final rehearsal for eternity."

"Very true," said Clara; "this world is a mere preparatory school, where, like wayward children, we become surprised and irritated at the slightest correction, being most unwilling to acknowledge that it is either required or deserved."

"Yet," added Mr Granville, "nothing brings out the best qualities of man like suffering. It is a hard rub given to gold, which becomes only the brighter, and I often think

how much interest and dignity is bestowed on every event of our short lives, by thinking that we are trained and disciplined as part of a mighty plan which has been going systematically on from the beginning of time, and must be continued to the very end."

"As you observed yesterday," replied Clara, "we are woven into the web of human life which is passing on daily into eternity, carrying us along on its surface with irresistible speed. We have no choice allowed either in coming into the world, or in going out of it, but the existence thus given to us leads on to an eternity of joy or of insufferable misery, according to the state of preparation in which we are found at last. It often occurs to me as a solemn reflection, that the two principles of good and evil are, as long as we live, to continue at war in our minds, but that, like fire and water, one of these will finally extinguish the other, and that, when death overtakes us, we shall then become either entirely holy or entirely reprobate."

"It is a solemn truth," said Mr Granville, with his usual tranquil dignity of manner.

"The tide of this world's history rolls on, while generation after generation, like the successive billows on a troubled ocean, rises and swells into momentary importance, till it be dashed in pieces and followed by another, but one great Omnipotent power directs the whole, and watches over each insignificant atom as it is hurried along. He, by whom the very hairs of our head are numbered, ordains for our good and for his glory, all events and all circumstances, whether great or small, and if our wills are implicitly conformed to his, we shall see the trifles of this life through a blaze of religious light, which will display to us their importance as a means of attaining good, but their insignificance if pursued as an end."

"Even now," observed Clara, "the very occupations and habits essential to a Christian life, in themselves confer a degree of happiness which the world cannot give, and does not know—a faint but pleasing emblem of what is promised in a better state."

"It appears to me," said Mr Granville, "that those who live for mere amusement,

are no wiser than if they embarked for a voyage round the world, in a little pleasure-boat, dancing lightly on the billows, with its white and flowing sails glittering in the sunbeams, rather than in a strong and sturdy vessel, cutting its dignified way with deep, steady, and undeviating course, in gladness and in safety, through tempest or calm, whether the breeze be adverse or favourable. Life is one long struggle, where the Christian must learn to hate much that he naturally loves, and to love much that he naturally hates, continually steering his course against nature, to advance in grace."

"I have heard it said," observed Marion, "that Paris is the place of all others, where men can most easily do without happiness, because if any one can entirely forget himself in mere pleasure, it is there."

"How often I have pitied those who squander their years abroad on an aimless, amusement-seeking life," said Clara. "What a weight of *ennui* they must endure! What a sense of utter worthlessness they must feel! A fever of delirious pleasure is probably the

best they occasionally enjoy! I have sometimes been astonished lately, when in confidential conversation with the gayest, and apparently the happiest of my companions, to find that they were actually labouring under the deepest depression of spirits."

"You need never be surprised by such discoveries, for I meet with them continually in my clerical visitations," replied Mr Granville. "The bright sun above our heads was not created to look down on scenes of merely selfish enjoyment. It cannot be; and if a thermometer could visibly display the relative degree of cheerfulness enjoyed through life by the slave of amusement, who consults only the impulse of his own passions, or the servant of God who obeys the dictate of reason and revelation, how astonished most men would be at the measureless disparity of actual felicity! The one wrapped up in selfishness, yet anxious to escape amidst a wild uproar of amusement, from his own thoughts; the other retiring often, voluntarily, to the companionship of his reflections, while his heart expands to embrace the true interests

of all mankind; the one rich in everything but real happiness; the other poor, perhaps, in respect to wealth, but yet possessing great riches."

"I am more and more convinced every day," said Clara, "that no living creature has a sufficient portion of happiness for himself, unless he shares that of others, while imparting his own; and that no kind of traffic brings so large a return to all parties, as that of giving and receiving the sympathy and good offices of Christian kindness. It is twice, or rather thrice blessed!"

"I often think," said Marion, "if we could step into the chamber of any person's mind, and look around us there, how astonishing it would be to survey even that of our most intimate friend! Many would appear large and spacious, bright, well furnished, and in good order; while others that make a tolerable appearance in society, because they need only shew a few samples in the window, would turn out to be filled with rubbish, narrow, gloomy, and disordered."

"Some minds," replied Mr Granville, "re-

semble a show-house laid out for display, where strangers are brought to envy, admire, and exclaim; but home-feelings are the real ornaments of life, which I covet for myself, and for those who are dearer to me than myself."

"It would be curious," observed Clara, smiling, "if every human being might choose the sort of happiness which, in a future life, he wishes to enjoy! There would be a strange diversity of inclination! I suppose a fox-hunter, who now finds his best enjoyment in riding six hours a-day, would then bespeak a horse which was never, in a long course of ages, to tire, accompanied by a fox ready to be killed every three hours. A gourmand would ask for a perpetual dinner, and a perpetual appetite; and Captain De Crespigny would wish for a continual succession of young ladies, all living on his attentions, and dying of broken hearts when he disappointed them."

"Only ask yourself in respect to any earthly pleasure, if you would wish it to be continued for ever, and that will convince you more than anything, Clara, that this world is

not our home," said Mr Granville. "There is never a moment of our lives in which we could hear with any satisfaction that what we then enjoyed was to continue throughout eternity. No! there is a mighty vacuum in our souls, which can only be filled by that which 'eye hath not seen, nor ear heard,' and which it hath not entered into the heart of man yet to conceive."

There is a free-masonry,—a sort of electrical connection between those who suffer and those who sympathise. It was evident to Marion that, beneath the look of calm, deep, and chastened composure, which might be traced in the large lustrous eyes of Clara Granville, there was the heavy aspect of one who had suffered, as well as thought much. The high arched forehead, in which the meanderings of the smallest blue vein was visible, and the ethereal transparency of her alabaster cheek, gave an almost poetical, but very melancholy expression to her countenance, and there was a subdued tenderness in her voice and manner, most touching to the heart.

She seemed like a lily blighted in the storm,

and often did Marion wonder what that sorrow could be, which shunned all notice, and seemed to bury itself beneath a multitude of thoughts and occupations for the good of others.

Once, and only once, Marion observed an alteration in the settled composure of Clara's manner, the occasion of which caused her considerable surprise. Hitherto, when she inadvertently mentioned Sir Patrick, the Granvilles insensibly changed the subject almost immediately, but without the slightest appearance of dislike or resentment, while Marion could not but silently blame her own forgetfulness of her brother's conduct to Mr Granville, which she thought might well render his name unacceptable in their family circle. One day, however, her eyes were accidentally fixed on Clara, when she mentioned that Sir Patrick had escorted her to the chapel door on the previous Sunday, and seemed more than half inclined to enter, but had suddenly burst away in a most unaccountable paroxysm, and hurried out of sight.

A deep and sudden blush overspread the

pale cheek of Miss Granville, who hastily looked up, and meeting Marion's eyes, the colour rushed in torrents over her face, arms, and neck, and her long eye-lashes became heavy with tears, while her emotion growing evidently uncontrollable, she threw down her work, and glided out of the room.

"Clara dislikes him for his rapacious conduct to Mr Granville. Why can I never learn to avoid Patrick's unlucky name," thought Marion. "It comes in *à propos* to everything or to nothing. I am unaccustomed to think before I speak, but this will make me remember to forget him in future. I could not have believed that Clara would feel that affair so very acutely."

Marion's thoughts now reverted with some anxiety to her brother and sister. They were either ignorant of her renewed intimacy with the Granvilles, or indifferent to it, but which might turn out to be the case, however important to her own happiness, she scarcely dared to investigate, and day after day passed on finding her almost domesticated with her newly-restored friend, and scarcely missed appa-

rently by Agnes. Marion was truth itself, and would have abhorred any clandestine engagements, but after having mentioned the first few times that she was going to call on Clara, the intimation being received by her brother and sister in solemn silence, she thought it unnecessary to make a repetition of the announcement; yet, as her feelings became more deeply and engrossingly interested, her anxiety became the greater to know what Sir Patrick might say or think on the occasion; and to Marion's experience it became true as to that of the poet,

"Love's first step is on a rose; the second finds a thorn."

CHAPTER IV.

"'Tis he!—how came he thence—what doth he here?"
BYRON.

It is the greatest height of wisdom to be happy, but the happiest periods of existence are the most difficult to describe; and from this time forth, within the domestic circle of Mr Granville, Marion was introduced into a scene of such refined and intellectual enjoyment, that it seemed to her as if she had hitherto beheld the picture of life, painted only by some inferior artist, coarsely daubed over with glaring hues, and vulgarly discoloured; but it now appeared to her in all the graceful symmetry, subdued harmony, and exquisite colouring of a great master.

Marion's natural taste had revolted from the mean, reckless, exaggerated caricatures of happiness, which had been exhibited to her in Sir Patrick's riotous revellings, and in her sister's feverish excitement; while Agnes wasted her heart and feelings in building up romances for herself, very much in the Minerva press and Adela-de-Montmorency school; but now the reality appeared in all its true fascination and inestimable worth to Marion, when she saw real felicity formed upon that Divine model, which she had before imagined, but never seen.

While sharing the pure joys and peaceful happiness of Clara and Richard, scarcely a thought of Marion's heart remained unspoken, except her secret and increasing consciousness of the wide disparity between that home, where she found nothing but a heartless desolation or neglect of her best feelings, and the beautiful exemplification of domestic felicity to which she had now been introduced. Every occupation or amusement in which she engaged with her friends, became enhanced in pleasure and importance, by the consci-

ousness, that beyond the mere gratification of the moment, it was consecrated to a higher and better aim; that it might be remembered hereafter without remorse, and that it was but a link in the bright chain of eternal happiness for which they were all preparing, and which they expected all to enjoy together, by the light of that sun which never sets, but shines beyond the grave.

The Christian friendship of a brother and sister for each other, is perhaps the purest and happiest of all earthly attachments, for there is not an hour of life from childhood to old age, in which they have not experienced the same joys and the same sorrows, known every vicissitude of existence together, acquired the same habits, wept for the same sorrows, rejoiced in the same prosperity, and cherished the same hopes. The affection of Clara and Richard was not the transient union of two individuals thrown together by the accident of birth, united by mere instinct, living in contact for convenience, and expecting to be finally separated by death; but it was the deep, strong heart-felt attachment of a Chris-

tian family, linked together for mutual support in sunshine or shadow, tenderly to assist each other along the difficult path of life, happy in the blessings that were given them now, and happier still in the expectation of those yet to come in that "new heaven and new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness."

As Mr Granville's character became more known to Marion, and the interest with which he listened to her thoughts and feelings perceptibly increased, she could not but secretly indulge sometimes in the thought, presumptuous though it seemed to herself, how different life might yet become, if the preference already so obviously testified were by any "strange impossibility" to increase, till he became allied to her by the strictest tie of perpetual friendship, and their lives and affections were mingled into one. Marion's young heart glowed with emotion when she thought how her feelings would all then be understood, her affections appreciated, her happiness cared for, and every trivial incident of her life rendered doubly important, because it belonged to another as well as to herself,—to one who would

share all her thoughts, direct all her actions, and mingle with every Christian motive to exertion, the desire to please him in her own happy home.

The attachment of Agnes for Captain De Crespigny was like that of a child for its rattle, compared with the ennobling sentiment of which Marion's heart was capable, for there, a mine of undiscovered affections lay buried and unknown, while every deeper emotion had hitherto been repelled or neglected by all around, except her uncle, and she could not but tremble to think, if her affections were ever warmed into life by reciprocal attachment, how inconceivable must be the misery or the happiness which would ensue. She indulged in no fallacious expectations of life, no romantic dreams of never-ending happiness and never dying love, which originate in unreasonable expectation, and too certainly end in bitter disappointment; but, to be the object of Mr Granville's unchangeable confidence and affection, his companion in sickness as much as in health, the sharer of his sorrows as well as of his joys, a participator in all his

duties, and, most of all, to testify her gratitude for his preference, by devoted attachment on her own part, not bounded within the perishable limits of a mere earthly tie,—these were the silent, unspoken wishes of Marion, which glanced through her mind often, as she hurried home, late and unwillingly, to St John's Lodge, and which caused her bright eye to beam with additional lustre, or brought the colour in a richer carnation to her cheek.

Events always happen when least expected, and if there be a day in life when any one in this world of change can feel peculiarly certain that nothing remarkable shall occur, that is probably the period when the most remarkable events take place. Marion had gone with Clara and her brother to spend a quiet day among the romantic glens of Roslin, when, finding herself alone with Mr Granville, in one of the most beautiful parts of the rocky glen, she was suddenly astonished by his making her, with manly frankness, and yet evident diffidence, an explicit declaration of his attachment. He said, on the occasion, all that

could be said by such a man, with the eloquence of deep emotion; and, encouraged by the timid pleasure with which Marion evidently listened to his words, Mr Granville laid open the whole depths of a heart in which all that was ennobling in nature had become embellished by all the purifying influences of religion, while she, with tears and blushes, heard thus unexpectedly what promised her the utmost sum of human felicity, and she attempted not to conceal how highly, beyond all expression, she appreciated his preference and attachment.

There is a language of the heart which words cannot express,—thoughts, feelings, and affections too deep to be told, but revealed only in the eyes and voice, when with sincerity of emotion, such as Mr Granville's, a long concealed attachment is at last declared.

"I have asked myself a thousand times whether I could make you happy, and if I believed," said he, "that there lived a man upon the earth who could love you more, or make you happier than myself, I would endeavour to resign all hope; but I know the

lasting nature of my attachment, which time itself cannot alter, nor death finally extinguish; and if such affection as mine, with nothing else to offer, can make you happy, it will be a new motive to exertion on my part, and a new source of thankfulness to the Divine Giver of all good. Your brother knows better than most men the pecuniary embarrassment in which a long-continued lawsuit has plunged me, and that my future income may not perhaps be large, but consult him,—and my very dear Marion, as I must for once be allowed to call you, consult your own wishes and your own happiness. Before giving me a final answer, take some days to consider" ——

" Not an hour,—or a moment," replied Marion, frankly, but with a faltering voice and glistening eye, while a vivid blush dyed her cheek, " I need only consider whether my own heart be worthy of you! I have thought sometimes,—I have dreamed of such happiness as ours shall be, but little did I hope ever to see it more than realised now!"

Love is with lovers an endless subject, and hours appeared like moments, while they con-

versed together on the past and the future with new feelings of confidence and joy, and the whole beautiful scenery around seemed as it were haunted by the spirit of thought and of enjoyment, while it was with a thrilling emotion of deep gratification that Marion now felt undoubtingly conscious that she had become indeed an object of preference to Mr Granville, that she would be thought of always by one whom she could never forget, that she knew the whole story of his heart and affections, and that these were devoted,—ardently devoted to herself; and now resolutely discarding every apprehension of future difficulties or sorrows, all around took the colour of her happiness, and she lived only in the joy of the present hour. Nothing required concealment between them, and it seemed the sole object of both to open up the most secret recesses of their minds, comparing opinions and feelings, while before long it appeared strange to Marion that a time had ever existed when their hearts were unknown to each other. No caprices, no misunderstandings, no jealousies could arise between them, for there seemed to

be but one heart and one mind in common, from the moment when Marion whispered her confession, that their attachment was reciprocal.

> Oh ! there are looks and tones that dart,
> An instant sunshine through the heart,
> As if the soul that minute caught,
> Some treasure it through life had sought.

At length they were warned to return homewards, by the golden light of a setting sun, which yet looked in glowing majesty over the distant hills, and sprinkled its glory on the highest tops of the trees, till they were tipped with fire; but Marion paused, in delighted admiration, on the centre of a rustic fairy-bridge, like a spider's web, thrown across the narrowest and deepest part of the swollen stream. Among rock and moss, tufted with weeping birch, the overhanging cliffs here formed themselves into two sides of a natural arch, in which nature had apparently omitted the key-stone, though art had supplied the deficiency, by a slight bridge, underneath which the sparkling waters boiled and thundered on with bewildering rapidity, like a

stream of light, bounding and leaping, with a clamorous brawling uproar, along the rocky channel, and disappearing behind a bold promontory, overgrown with tall pines, and twisted with the knotted and gnarled roots of many an ancient oak.

The country seemed indeed clothed with a prodigality of beauty—the wild confusion of rocks—the feathered branches of a hundred trees—the sparkling sunbeams, sprinkled like scattered leaf-gold on every object—the shadows interlaced upon the verdant grass—the yellow broom, glowing with its sunny hues—the groups of well-conditioned cattle ruminating on the meadows—and the stream, now murmuring in wild music over its rocky bed, and dimpling into smiles beneath the sunshine, while the mind and conversation of Mr Granville travelled into the highest regions of thought, and Marion compared the bright gay aspect of all around to her own happy feelings.

"It is a pleasure to think," said Marion with animation, "that the poorest and most destitute of human beings might enjoy the

beauties of nature as we do now, and all the pleasures, too, of confidence and affection, if they but knew how to value them. God gives all that is most precious to his creatures in common; and how little of our real happiness in life is derived from the mere vulgar display of wealth, equipages, jewels, and external splendour. It is not the materials of our happiness which are so important, as the way in which we build up the fabric."

"I have sometimes been ready to regret," answered Mr Granville, "that in offering you my hand and fortune, I offer you so little; but I never desired wealth for myself. No man living cares less for luxury; and we may trust that my devoted affection shall succeed in shielding you from the thousand inconveniencies of a very limited income."

"It is the heart I value," whispered Marion. "With all my faults, the love of money never was one. We shall be rich in happiness, and in all that Providence gives to the most favoured of those who trust in Him."

"Yes! such mutual confidence as ours, with Christian contentment and cheerfulness,

are the real elixir of happiness," replied Mr Granville. "It is by closing our eyes against the pure enjoyments prepared for us by the God of nature, and opening them to the artificial wants invented by man, that we lose all the simplicity, and most of the real felicity of life. One can scarcely wonder, in a scene like this, that many Christians think this beautiful earth, in a purified state, shall hereafter become the place of our eternal happiness; but wherever the presence of God is, that, and that only, will constitute heaven."

"And who could wish for more?" said Marion. "That should in itself excite all our gratitude and joy."

"Yet this noisy turbulent stream, rushing wildly past in its angry career, is like the troubled course of human wishes, thoughts, and speculations, with which we are continually disturbing that calm, unruffled state, in which our minds would best reflect the light of heaven," answered Mr Granville. "No one ever had a plummet long enough to measure the depth of that love to man, which has placed us as probationers in our sin-blighted

world; and even if we had no futurity of glory promised us, and were finally to perish at death, we have cause to be thankful for seeing so much natural beauty, and so much intellectual enjoyment, while permitted to remain here.

"Yes!" replied Marion, considering that we have forfeited every blessing, I think any man who has enjoyed life as he ought to do, might give a receipt in full, as having received a thousand mercies to which he had no claim."

"But who can imagine the magnificent expansion of mind hereafter, when the whole scheme of nature, of providence, and of grace, shall be fully revealed, and our capacities enlarged, to comprehend and appreciate the mighty plan," continued Mr Granville. "Now, even the wisest and best of Christians must be satisfied with the intelligent ignorance of knowing that he knows nothing; for even angels, travelling on the wings of thought for thousands of years, cannot yet understand the whole counsel of God; but our present business is to study and practise here the temper

and manners of that celestial city in which we hope hereafter to reside, that our attachment, begun indeed now upon earth, may be blessed and perpetuated throughout eternity."

C'est bien d'être avec les gens qu'on aime—leur parler, ne leur parler pas. The eye of Mr Granville now gazed in delighted admiration on the whole circumference of earth and sky, with a keen perception of their beauties, and an intelligent recollection, that while the eternal sky and the decaying earth form an apt emblem of soul and body, all the works of nature may be brought beautifully to exemplify the works of grace. Marion and he long stood still together in that companionable silence, which became so soothing and delightful to their spirits, that neither seemed willing to break the spell.

Both Marion and Mr Granville delighted in devoutly contemplating the glories of creation—nature's system of divinity—those "elder Scriptures writ by God's own hand"—the majestic display of Almighty wisdom, power, and goodness, in the grand theatre of human life,

as well as in the minutest events of their own existence.

> This is religion—not unreal dreams,
> Enthusiast raptures, and seraphic gleams ;
> But Faith's calm triumph—Reason's steady sway—
> Not the brief light'ning, but the perfect day.

Thus musing together, in silent, speechless happiness, Mr Granville was suddenly roused, by observing a young lady approach with agitated and disordered steps, leaning on the arm of a more elderly female, and walking at a pace of such unusual rapidity, that it almost amounted to running. They both glanced frequently and hurriedly behind, as if under great alarm, while so remarkable an expression of terror was evident in all their looks and movements, that Mr Granville, without a moment's hesitation, stepped forward, and courteously volunteered his services, while Marion with delighted astonishment, recognised her friend and companion, Caroline Smythe.

"You seem alarmed! Allow me to offer my assistance!" said Mr Granville. "Shall we accompany you?"

"No! no! I am safest alone!" gasped the younger lady, in accents of wild alarm. "He carries pistols! He is perfectly insane! Stop him if you can! Oh! stop him! Do not let him follow! Direct him wrong! Do anything! Try, if you possibly can, to detain him!"

Mr Granville glanced swiftly round, and observed, with surprise, not far from the bridge, and turning the sharp corner of a projecting rock, the figure of a tall powerful young man, of rather gentlemanlike appearance, wrapped up to the chin in a large cloak, who instantly, on perceiving strangers, muffled his face closely in his handkerchief, and drew down his hat, but approached with rapid strides and violent gesticulations, apparently speaking to himself, and muttering curses with terrifying vehemence. Not a moment was lost in hesitation, before Marion assisted the elder lady in supporting Caroline onwards, who evidently suffered under a mortal terror, while they rapidly dragged her across the fragile bridge, on which Marion and Richard had so lately enjoyed some brief and happy moments.

Mr Granville, in the mean time, approached the stranger so as to stand directly in his path, and necessarily to impede his progress, while he steadily fixed his gaze upon the blazing eye of the madman with a calm and commanding look, which testified an unflinching determination to obstruct his onward career, and a steady resolution not to be intimidated by the air of scowling defiance with which he was met.

"Stand back!" exclaimed the stranger in a tone of maniacal fury. "Life and death are at stake! stand back! delay me one moment, and you die!"

"Is the bridge secure?" asked Mr Granville, catching hold of the madman's arm when he was rushing past, and instantly stooping down as if to examine the foundation, when, by a powerful effort of strength, he suddenly hurled the whole fabric into the eddying stream, which washed the shattered fragments in a moment out of sight.

With a cry of almost fiendish rage, and setting his teeth till it seemed as if they would be ground to powder, the maniac sprang like a tiger on Mr Granville, and

would have collared him; but with great agility he eluded the madman's grasp, and fixed his eyes with an expression of stern resolution upon his frantic antagonist, till his face cowered beneath that steady gaze, when he said in a calm, slow, resolute accent,

"Those ladies shall pass on unmolested. It is base and cowardly to terrify timid females whom we are bound with our very lives to protect. Go back as you came, and beware of touching them or me."

A wild and hideous laugh was the maniac's only reply, and his eyes gleamed more and more fiercely, while he gnawed his lip with rage, but at length suddenly bursting with irresistible fury past Mr Granville, he took a long quick run to where the bridge had formerly stood, and instantly, with a single bound of marvellous agility, leaped across. Richard Granville was for half a moment bewildered with astonishment at this unexpected achievement, and saw with consternation and dismay that it would be vain to attempt impeding the infuriated maniac, who turned a deaf ear to his loudly vociferated remon-

strance, and deliberately fired a pistol in the air, while he held up another in a menacing attitude towards Mr Granville, and then replacing the deadly weapon in his breast, he hastily disappeared along the same path which had been so recently pursued by the ladies.

Richard, heedless of any danger to himself, became now most seriously alarmed for the safety of Marion and her companions, therefore he delayed not an instant to scramble across the stream where it was fordable, and to follow at his utmost speed. In the impetuosity of Mr Granville's career, the ground receded beneath his feet, and as he rushed onward a band of iron seemed to restrain his breath, for the road became steeper and more solitary, while long grass and weeds had grown over the wheel-tracks, and the way was impeded by wild straggling hedges, which threw their sprays of brier and thorn almost entirely across the way. At length meeting a couple of countrymen, he hurriedly explained his apprehensions, when they mentioned having met a strange wild-looking man, proceeding with long strides in an opposite direc-

tion. To Mr Granville's great relief, however, they seemed to think that no ladies could have gone in that way, and after prevailing on the two labourers, with a bribe, to assist him in capturing the maniac, he resolutely and fearlessly pursued his course.

Marion, meantime, had accompanied the two ladies in their most unexpected flight through the forest, at a pace which precluded the possibility of speaking, except that now and then an ejaculation of terror, or an expression of fervent thankfulness, was wrung from them when they glanced around, giving a fearful idea of instant danger. Caroline's pallid lips were parted, her eyes straining forward with impatient apprehension, and every limb nerved for exertion, while she silently pursued her way, though her feet seemed to herself as if they had become lead, in her vehement efforts to fly onwards; and the countenance of her aunt expressed scarcely less terror.

Without speaking, Marion did all in her power to accelerate their progress, but at length Caroline's footsteps faltered, her eye became dim, and she staggered back, faint

with fatigue, seeing which Marion silently pointed to a large empty barn which stood beside the road, and having supported her within the door, Caroline fell helplessly on the floor, covering her face with her hands, and trembling visibly in every limb.

Marion brought water, rubbed Caroline's temples, and tried by every means to sooth her with the hope of being safe, but in vain, —her tongue grew parched, her eyes became glassy, her features almost livid, and she faintly pointed towards the door, which Marion barricadoed to the best of her ability. Caroline threw herself back on a heap of straw, and covered her face with her hands in a helpless agony of fear. Several minutes afterwards elapsed in breathless silence on the part of Marion and Mrs Smythe, when Caroline at length started up, eager to pursue her course towards the nearest village, now scarcely a mile off, while her companions earnestly entreated her to rest rather, and compose herself.

"He has lost the track! he cannot be following us now," said Marion, in accents of trembling alarm, the agitated tone of which

belied her words, while an icy chill had crept through her veins. "Let us rest here, we are safe now! He will hurry past! He will not think of searching for us in this place!"

"He will! he will! when the fit is on, nothing escapes him," replied Caroline, who felt a choking sensation in her throat which impeded her utterance. "Oh! think of the fearful past! that dreadful night when he first became insane! Why did I believe him, when he promised never to terrify me more! a horrid dread is upon me! a strange ringing in my ears! a weight of lead upon my heart!"

"How wonderful that he never can be traced! that he always finds us out! that if there ever be a moment when we feel peculiarly safe from his presence, he comes!" whispered Mrs Smythe in an under tone, as if afraid that the very walls might re-echo her words. "We must leave this neighbourhood, we must take new precautions till he can be found and shut up."

Before Caroline could utter the affirmative which trembled on her lips, her eyes became stony with a look of sudden fear, her hands

were faintly clasped together, her parched and livid lips were parted, and with a half-uttered shriek she threw herself behind Marion, riveting her arms closely round her waist, when, the next minute, a window of the barn was dashed in with a violence which nothing could resist, and the maniac, giving a wild cry of malignant triumph, began to clamber in, clinging to the window-sill with his long bony fingers, while concealing his face, so that nothing could be seen but his eyes, which burned like living coals.

"You have deceived me once, but you shall deceive me no more!" said he, in hoarse deep accents, and with a ghastly look, while the terrified girl seemed to wither beneath his glance. "I cannot breathe while you live! I have shed blood before now, and none can tell who did it! You may call, but there are none to help,—you may weep, but I cannot pity,—you may fly, but there is no escape! My heart is turned to stone! My blood is liquid fire! Strange figures are gibbering behind me! Unearthly voices are whispering in my ear! I will do it! Yes! when I stand on

the scaffold to be executed I shall not be nearer death than you are at this moment."

Marion, conscious that the madman's fury was not directed at herself, and feeling the courage which arises from desperation, resolved, at whatever cost, at least to delay if possible any catastrophe, which she might not be able finally to prevent, and anxious even for an instant, to take the maniac's eye off the trembling girl beside her, she now walked resolutely forward to the window, though trembling as much as if she were about to throw herself beside a wild beast in his cage. Her teeth chattered with terror, and the words seemed to stiffen in her throat as she uttered them, but still she persevered, saying in a gentle, soothing accent,

"You are a gentleman, and cannot want money! What would you have? Who has injured you? Tell me why you pursue us? Think for one moment how many years you have to live, and how miserable you may be for ever, if you do a rash act now! Pause and consider, for the curse of God and man will be upon you!"

The madman gazed for an instant at the pale countenance of Marion, every feature in which quivered with emotion; he seemed almost ashamed of his own fearful violence, and was about in a calmer tone to reply, when the barn door was suddenly burst open by the two countrymen, who entered with Mr Granville.

"He shall die!" muttered the maniac between his clenched teeth, "Both! all! all! the power of life and death is here!"

Marion heard a sound of terror close beside her,—it was a click, as of a pistol being cocked, the muzzle of which was directed towards Mr Granville, while the maniac deliberately took his aim, but with a sudden impulse of desperation she threw her arm upwards, and struck the fatal weapon, which instantly went off with a report that stunned her senses.

Nearly blinded by the shock, Marion staggered backwards as if about to fall, yet strained her eyes in speechless agony to ascertain if Mr Granville were saved. There was blood upon his cheek, but he rushed forward at once and pinioned the madman's arms within

his own, while the two countrymen assisted, and after a severe scuffle, the maniac, perfectly mastered, lay panting on the floor, while he glared on Mr Granville with a frown of baffled malignity, uttering execrations both loud and deep, so dreadful to hear, that Marion's heart quailed within her at their awful import, though unable to look round while occupied in applying restoratives to Caroline, who had sunk with a heavy groan perfectly insensible on the floor.

After more than ten minutes, during which not a pulse could be felt, Caroline was carried into the air by Mr Granville, when the wind, playing on her cheek, brought on a gradual restoration to life,—a slight fluttering was perceived at her heart, a faint colour tinged her cheek, and with a deep-drawn sigh, and a bewildered look, she suddenly started up, as if about to renew her flight.

"Dear Caroline!" said Marion, calmly, "all is safe! Do not agitate yourself! We have indeed had a wonderful escape."

Miss Smythe embraced Marion in a transport of joy and gratitude, after which she

turned to Mr Granville, uttering the warmest expression of her thanks, while he with an evident desire to conclude a discussion obviously so agitating to the two ladies, proposed after amply remunerating the two countrymen, his assistants, to hurry forward and send conveyances from the neighbouring inn. With one anxious look at the pale exhausted countenance of Marion, Mr Granville hastily disappeared, meditating, as he hastened along, with deep interest on his recent adventure, and with pleasing emotion on the happy *eclaircissement* which had that morning taken place with Marion, binding them to each other by the strong ties of honour, principle, and affection.

Half an hour afterwards, Richard returned with two carriages, in one of which he placed the ladies, whom he met advancing along the road, but after proceeding forward with the other to secure his prisoner, he was startled and astonished to discover that the maniac and his two keepers had entirely disappeared.

CHAPTER V.

"Oh! la belle chose que la poste!"
SEVIGNE.

"WELL! I do declare! some people have the most marvellous good fortune!" exclaimed Sir Patrick next morning, turning to Marion, with a newspaper before him. "Here is an account of Granville,—Richard Granville being engaged in a splendid adventure. I might live for ever, and not meet with such a thing. He has rescued Miss Howard the heiress from that mad cousin who haunts her with some love-and-murder threats, and who will positively some day assassinate her, like the Miss Raes and Miss Shuckburghs of former times. These very good people, like

Granville, who profess to be quite above the world, are all very fond of money. Ten to one, Granville marries Miss Howard in a month."

"So the young lady is to be murdered first, and married immediately afterwards," said Marion, laughing to see her brother's impetuosity. "The heroine of that story is, after all, only my old school-companion Caroline Smythe. She has been persecuted by this man, she tells me, ever since her childhood, but now he must be put in confinement for life, and—and—as for Mr Granville, —— Patrick, —— with your leave, I have a very private and particular reason for believing he is —— previously engaged."

A brilliant blush mounted to Marion's very temples, while her brother might have almost heard her trembling, but a smile of conscious happiness played round her mouth, while her long eye-lashes drooped over her burning cheeks, when she spoke these words in an accent of pleased but tremulous emotion, and Sir Patrick, after gazing in her countenance for a moment with an expression of angry

perplexity, suddenly started on his feet, crumpling up the newspaper in his hand with a fiery exclamation of rage, saying,

"Speak again, Marion; tell me what this means. The most uncommon thing in this world is a direct answer, but your blushes are like no other person's, for they betray everything. Girls, from the very beginning of time, have always found out the last man on earth they ought to like, and live in a state of romantic misery till they can marry him. But it shall never be! I hate and detest Granville! He has injured me! He has caused all my recent sufferings. He shall feel what I have felt. I have the power now, and the will to be revenged. In his sacred profession he dare not and cannot marry you without my consent—and never! no never, shall he have it. Marion, you are a mere child yet! you do not know your own value, and would let yourself go at a mere pepper-corn rent! Granville would become a perfect beggar if he loses our law suit. You ought to be offered the first match in Scotland."

"So I am," replied Marion in a low and gentle voice. "Mr Granville scarcely has his equal in the world!"

"Pshaw! nonsense! I have other views for you! Marion, you have not an idea of the sensation you make. My friends are all raving about you. I never understood till now why you cared so little about any of them. Let Agnes look to her laurels, for I am in more than one secret already that would astonish her. Granville must be allowed to follow up his adventure with the heiress. Never mention his name to me again. You may depend upon it, in a month he will be ready and willing to marry Miss Howard."

"Let your consent depend upon Richard's constancy, and then I shall be secure," answered Marion, with a playful smile. "He shall be at liberty to change his mind on a moment's notice; but in the mean time, Patrick, I have a great idea that he will continue always the same; and be assured that I certainly shall."

"Pshaw! nonsense, Marion! You never

could be satisfied with the stupid sort of happiness to be found in a hum-drum parsonage. Give me no more of your love-in-a-cottage ideas, when I know you have a chance of —— of, no matter who! somebody worth a dozen Mr Granvilles, and who could buy him up a hundred times over."

"One Mr Granville is quite enough," replied Marion, smiling. "If he were like the emperor of China, cousin-german to the stars and uncle to the moon, I could not think more of him. Riches are only to be valued for the use people make of them, but he is 'more bent to raise the wretched than to rise.' Very little is essential, Patrick, 'when humble happiness endears each scene;' and nothing more is indispensable to me than to be so loved by one who is deserving of my love in return. How much rather I would live with a poor man who is liberal, than with a rich man who is avaricious; and Richard's wealth, though not great, is furnished with wings to fly away on a thousand embassies of mercy and liberality."

"I wish mine had wings to come, instead

of to go; but say what you will, it bores me to hear of Granville, he is so absurdly different from everybody else."

"So much the worse for everybody else," observed Marion, with a good-humoured smile. "Is that the blackest count in your indictment?"

"And bad enough, too! I'm told there's not a garret nor a dingy cellar-full of misery in the city, where Granville is not upon visiting terms. He is a perfect Humane Society in himself. I daresay he will receive a public dinner and a piece of plate from the beggars at last."

"Let me entreat, Marion," said Agnes, who had entered during the discussion, "that you will not be running about with those Granvilles, in search of typhus fever or small-pox. You really ought to be fumigated every time you return from these houses, where the people are all dying of dirt."

"When Lady Towercliffe recommended her husband's old castle in the country to me once, for the shooting, she finished the catalogue of its many perfections, by saying,

'and we have such very pleasant beggars!'" observed Sir Patrick, laughing. "I should certainly have been tempted to bag a few brace of them! The Irish fellow whom you may remember besetting my door so long in Edinburgh, without extracting a *sous*, came up to me lately, in the coolest manner imaginable, and said, 'you must find another beggar, Sir Patrick, for the situation here is not worth keeping!' I gave the rascal half a sovereign for his humour, and never saw his face again."

"It is all very well, if beggars find us out, to give a trifle, and so get rid of their importunity," said Agnes, in her most benevolent accent, "but the idea of setting out on a crusade to find them out, is rather too amusing. I am immensely charitable, however, in referring cases of distress to my friends, but benevolence is the most expensive of all virtues to set up for."

"Better do too much than too little," replied Marion. "We must not suppose every man in want is either a knave or a fool, and no remembrance will last so long in our minds

as the good we have done, or left undone, for we gain the highest happiness to ourselves by dispensing it to others. Yesterday Mr Granville relieved a poor man from actual starvation, nearly ninety years old."

"Was he an orphan?" asked Sir Patrick, in a rallying tone. "What could the old fellow be doing in the world so long! but if I might be allowed to give an opinion, which I never do! it is, that you should avoid those dens of infection and filth."

"There is no absurd romance in their benevolence, and Clara is never permitted by her brother to visit anywhere, till he has personally ascertained that there is no contagion of either the scarlet, yellow, or typhus fever in the house," continued Marion; "but we accompanied him last week to see a poor woman who was in a darkened room, with her face muffled up, and yet I could not but fancy the tone of her voice familiar to me. I was on the point of telling her so when the door opened, and who should come in but my uncle's clerk, Mr Howard, who seemed so caught! One seldom can know who are charitable and

kind in this world, for I never suspected him of being a good Samaritan. He said it must have been a mistake about my ever having heard the poor creature's voice before, as to his certain knowledge she has been bed-ridden these ten years; therefore, Clara and I gave her all we could spare and came away. There was only one seat in the room, and nothing else but the naked walls!"

"How very indecent!" said Sir Patrick, taking up his newspapers, "those *pauvres honteuses* have a sad life of it! You will positively draw tears from my eyes!"

"Nothing will do that but a mouthful of mustard," replied Marion, with a brilliant smile. "It would be more to the purpose if I drew a shilling from your purse! You have no idea, Patrick, how many starving people there are in the very houses that you see from these windows!"

"Well, really! I wish every body had L.5,000 a-year," observed Agnes, yawning. "If we could build an addition to the world it would be a great convenience! There certainly are too many of us!"

"That is a most original and interesting remark of yours!" exclaimed Sir Patrick. laughing. "We have certainly more cats than can kill mice. I did hear, that it was very seriously debated at the Speculative Society lately, whether the creation of the world had been on the whole an advantage to Ireland or not! How the question was decided I forgot to ask!"

"No doubt the existence of every living being must be an advantage, if rightly used," observed Marion, in a gentle, diffident voice, "but if not, then certainly it were better never to have been born."

"That is your last new importation of Granville-ism," said Agnes, satirically. "Well! I would much rather, Marion, that you took the typhus fever, than that you became a methodist! Pray do not infect me with either the one or the other."

"There is always more contagion in what is evil than in what is good," replied Marion. "Fevers are infectious, but health is not. Most of the illness I have seen lately arises from bad food, or rather from no food at all."

"It occurs to me!" said Sir Patrick, throwing down his newspaper, "that as all rivers are formed of drinkable water, it is most unlucky that the ground is not formed of eatable bread! What a world of trouble it would save about the corn laws!"

"But in such a case!" replied Marion, laughing, "no man would work, and the stones on the road might have to break themselves!"

"If the weather, too, were permitted to be regulated by act of Parliament, how droll it would be to read a petition from the farmers of Mid-Lothian against the late excessive rains, or from the hackney-coachmen against a long continuance of fine weather. How I should like to see the summer with which any one of my tenants would be satisfied!"

"Of course it is their business to complain, or you would increase their rents. If a farmer came to your factor in extacies with his crops, and wishing a renewal of his lease, what terms would satisfy you? We are all like buckets in a well,—what raises one depresses another, *ainsi va le monde.*"

CHAPTER VI.

"Judge before friendship,—then confide till death."
COWPER.

MARION was no miser of happiness to hoard it all up for her own use, and most willingly would she have imparted a share of her present joyous feelings to Agnes, but in vain did she look for any encouragement to the frank, confiding, and sociable nature of her own disposition, from a sister who had no desire to share in the hopes and fears, the joys and sorrows of a disinterested attachment, such as she could neither understand nor approve.

"Perfect happiness and a hut in the country!" said Agnes, contemptuously, while the warm blood mantled into Marion's cheek, but

instantly putting her features in order to look composed and indifferent, she turned the conversation to no particular subject.

Too happy to be silent, Marion next selected for her *confidante* the very last person upon earth whom it would have occurred to most young ladies to entrust with the progress of a love affair, while, from Sir Arthur, she received the deepest and most affectionate interest in return for all she told him, though he acted like a perfect incendiary, by adding fuel to the flame, inviting Mr Granville to his house whenever he could come, and praising him whenever he departed.

With daily increasing solicitude, Marion's elderly confidant listened to all the simple romance of her thoughts and feelings, delighted with the overflow of a heart which had nothing to conceal. Neither overvaluing nor undervaluing the gifts of fortune, Sir Arthur felt unspeakable comfort in the belief that Marion would now be better protected and cared for through life, than could have been hoped, from the few years that remained to himself, or from the heedless indifference of

her brother, who had never shewn her much regard till now, when he testified his care in the way least acceptable to Marion, by an angry resolute opposition to her marrying and settling, as he persisted in saying, upon ninepence a-day!"

The difficulty increased every week, of joining that happy circle where her most delightful hours had been passed, and a thousand impediments were now contrived by Sir Patrick to prevent Marion from visiting, even at Sir Arthur's; while the young Baronet filled his house at St John's Lodge with so many of his friends, that the Admiral laughingly observed one day, while he seemed possessed by the very spirit of raillery and good-humour, "I think, Marion, your brother is actually laying siege to you now,—or rather, it is turning into a blockade! I suppose he expects some of those half-witted blockheads fluttering about the house to eclipse Granville, which is of course extremely probable! Now, for the twentieth time to-day, let us discuss my nephew-elect. He seems —— rather amiable!"

"Seems! dear uncle Arthur! he is all that

he seems, and a hundred times more! He is —— —— need I say what he is?"

"No! no! I remember to have read novels long ago, and know all about it! Marion, you may well feel proud of being admired and beloved by one who is himself admired and beloved by all! I cannot think," added Sir Arthur with a sly smile, "what in all the world Mr Granville sees to fancy in you!"

"That is exactly what puzzles me! I often wonder why he likes me!"

"Because, I suppose, somehow or other, he cannot help it. Now Marion, you have the worst of memories I know, for what Mr Granville says; but do try if you can recollect a few of his last conversations to entertain me with! You will have so many lovers soon at St John's Lodge, that it may perhaps become impossible to distinguish Granville from the rest, or one from another!"

"No! that can never be! Patrick's friends are scarcely my acquaintances, and not at all likely to become admirers. I feel and fully appreciate my own happiness now in being chosen and preferred by one whose thoughts

and wishes are all such as my own may be ready and willing to echo,—who can lead my mind upwards, as well as onwards, whose attachment is founded on the purest sentiments,—and, not the least of his attractions, dear uncle Arthur, who loves and honours you as I do!"

"Merely because I am your uncle! Depend upon it, all my great merits are eclipsed by that one! Well! I must put up with it, till he knows better! I need not send to the circulating libraries for a romance now, as there are so many to interest me at home!"

These words of Sir Arthur's referred not merely to the growing attachment of Richard and Marion, but Caroline Smythe, who was about soon to depart for England, had in the meantime become a constant and prominent member of the gay little circle at Seabeach Cottage, where her friends exerted their utmost endeavours to restore the tone of her nerves and spirits, which were still much affected by her recent alarm, and none succeeded so well in diverting her thoughts, and beguiling her time as the lively animated

Henry De Lancey, who became himself daily more entranced with the happiness of being in her society. His preference for Caroline was testified in the way most truly flattering, being more betrayed than professed, yet his whole heart was visible in every word and action, while he evidently became every day twenty times more deeply in love than at first, and the interesting countenance of Caroline grew more interesting from the additional depth of expression to be traced there. Sir Arthur, happy in the happiness of others, appeared to cast aside all care, while sunning himself in the joyous smiles of those who had so long been the dearest objects of his solicitude, and day after day the intimacy and mutual affection of all parties appeared to be riveted by fetters which never could be broken, though it sometimes crossed Marion's mind as a cause of surprise that Sir Arthur, who did nothing without reflection, should appear never once to apprehend the difficulty into which Henry's attachment would evidently plunge him.

There was something irresistible in the

fascination of young De Lancey's character, the warmth of which seemed as if it must have been nurtured beneath a brighter sun than that of others, while there was an irresistible captivation in his joyous youthful aspect, his frank and graceful carriage. Mr Granville, who had a genius for making society agreeable, as well as improving, treated him with the confidence and companionship of a brother, almost insensibly developing the graces of a heart fitted to awaken the deepest interest, and drawing forth a power of mind and character in Henry, of which he could scarcely before have deemed himself capable, while leading him often away from the common-place nothings of the passing hour, to the highest regions of thought and to the brightest aspirations after future distinction, after immortal wisdom and undying happiness.

"We must live and act for others," observed Mr Granville one day in his usual tone of energetic animation. "The miser who collects useless hoards which are lost to him at death is not more absurd in his vain pursuit,

than the mere philosopher who lays up stores of knowledge to perish with himself. The good or the evil which may be done by the most insignificant individual both now and to generations yet unborn, is incalculable; and the only important question we can ask of ourselves, in which no other can be concerned, is, "What shall I do to be saved?" That, each man must seek to ascertain for himself; and who would not say that the greatest fool on earth is he who forgets to ask it at all,—or who asks it with indifference!"

"I am more and more convinced," said Henry, "that religion is the greatest support in life, and the only one in death. On our hearts it is like the calm serene light given by the moon when she soars vividly along the heavens amidst clouds and darkness, pouring celestial light upon the earth in pure and holy splendour, beautiful and sublime, yet often how melancholy and solemnizing,

> 'Thoughts of immortal beauty spring to birth,
> And waft the soul beyond the dreams of earth.'"

Henry scarcely ventured to tell his own

heart how deeply and engrossingly he had become attached to Caroline, while in secret he remembered every word or look which had endeared her to him, with a pleasure and emotion till now unknown, and which could not but be most painful in his solitary hours of reflection, when he considered the uncertain tenure of his own situation in life, and his ignorance respecting that of Miss Smythe, though he felt soothed and comforted by the consciousness, that to her he was evidently not indifferent, and that Sir Arthur either seemed blind to their increasing preference, or pleased to witness it.

Henry had seated himself one morning in a small ante-room, repairing his fishing tackle, and though voices became audible in the drawing-room, in animated conversation, he continued perfectly heedless of what was passing, till at length his own name, spoken in accents always dear to him, irresistibly enchained his attention. Sir Arthur was requesting Caroline to sing one of his favourite melodies, and she gayly resisted his entreaties, saying, in her liveliest accents, "No! no!

wait patiently till the evening. That was copied for me by Mr De Lancey, and I promised he should be present the first time it was performed. I can refuse you nothing, Sir Arthur, so I must seek safety by flight!"

Nodding and smiling, with one of her archest looks, Caroline tripped lightly into the room, where Henry sat, so shaded by the window-curtain, that he was perfectly invisible, when a moment afterwards she was followed by Mrs Smythe, who said, in an excited tone of angry remonstrance,

"Is there no end, Caroline, to this extraordinary intimacy of yours with young De Lancey! It really is becoming absurd! Sir Arthur is very much to blame in giving it any encouragement! A youth without prospects! without so much as a name!"

"With no seat in Parliament! no diplomatic appointment! no family living! no title!" pursued Caroline, laughing. "You know, my dear aunt, I never centred all good in birth and station!"

"Neither did I suppose you would dispense with both!" replied Mrs Smythe, in a tone

of increasing bitterness, and hurrying towards the door, evidently so irritated, that she dared not trust herself to remain. "Rather than have my niece united to a nameless outcast, living upon the bounty of Sir Arthur Dunbar, or of connections who are probably disgraced by his existence, I would prefer seeing you married to the Twopenny Postman, for he at least is independent, and has something."

A glow like fire rushed through Henry's frame at these words, and before Mrs Smythe had closed the door, the hot blood seemed boiling in his veins with agonized shame and sorrow. Pale and red by turns, he leaned his head on his hands in solitary desolation, and quivered in every nerve with grief and self-reproach. The whole harvest of his happiness seemed blasted at a single breath; his mind was a wild chaos of conflicting emotions; and one only thought rose paramount to all, that he had been held up to ridicule and contempt, perhaps deservedly, in the eyes of that one beloved being, the object of his dearest, first, and only attachment. He wreathed his hands together, and bent his head in a temp-

est of emotion, while the whole rich treasure of his affections and hopes lay mouldered into rubbish at his feet; for he felt and knew that all Mrs Smythe had said, was but too painfully true. A dark extinguisher had fallen over every earth-born wish. He felt that it had been unpardonable even to desire that the happiness of another should be linked with his uncertain fate; and he struggled long, though vainly, for composure, while contemplating the destruction of that one hope which had contained the sum of all his earthly wishes.

"I will yet deserve her or die!" thought Henry, overleaping impossibilities, or, with the sanguine feelings of a young and ardent mind, not even seeing them. "My pleasing dream has ended for the present; and how could I ever expect it should be otherwise! but I cannot and will not blot out from the picture of my future life, that form which embellished every hope of my existence! Days and nights of laborious exertion shall be as nothing, if I can but prove myself worthy of Caroline,—if I can but, at the remotest period of time, call

her my own. Were it not for such a prospect I should become indifferent even to myself!"

Henry's musings were disturbed by a slight noise near him, and when, with a flashing eye, he started and looked up, the very object of all his thoughts, hopes, and regrets was beside him, and he beheld Caroline, her cheeks suffused with the deepest emotion, and her downcast eyelashes sparkling with tears, while in hurried accents of extreme agitation, she spoke to him almost inaudibly:

"Is it the affairs of the nation you are so deeply meditating on, Mr De Lancey, or your own affairs?"

"My affairs!" exclaimed Henry, in a tone of deep depression, while his dark lustrous eyes became dim and glassy with emotion. "I have no affairs! a creature of charity,—of the most generous and noble-minded benevolence,—but still a dependant on the bounty of others! In your presence I could forget the mystery and bitterness of my lot,—but I forget it too much! I am not answerable for my feelings, but I am for my actions; and I

must leave you for ever! I can never know the rapture of a requited attachment; but why should I not acknowledge the feelings of admiration that must be common to all in your presence. I am a nameless outcast; but pardon my folly and infatuation in having loved you, without a hope of return. My mother perished, as you know, under fearful circumstances; and who can tell whether my father may not have died like a felon! My worst enemy can say, or suspect nothing worse than I sometimes fear; and I deserve all I suffer for having one moment forgotten the dark mystery of my lot."

"You were here, then, Mr De Lancey, some moments ago," said Caroline, in hurried accents! "You overheard all that my aunt so imprudently said! you! —— you —— what must you think!"

"I dare not trust my lips with the expression of half what I think and feel," replied Henry, in a low, deep, broken voice, and fixing his troubled eye on Caroline. "Let me speak for once to you on that subject which another began! Let me for once relieve my

heart, by saying how entirely,—how unchangeably I love you. What bright visions of hope have flitted before my fancy, all blighted now for ever! I know the utter despair that ought to attend my attachment. Love, to others a blessing, must ever be to me a curse; yet I would rather love you without a hope of return, than gain the hearts of a thousand others. I neither ask nor expect encouragement; only believe and pity me! In the long absence which awaits me from home, let me be consoled by thinking, that I am not utterly despised and forgotten,—that when time and distance have separated us, I may still preserve a place in your memory, though not perhaps remembered, as I shall remember you."

Caroline listened with deep delight to this renewed confession of Henry's long-cherished attachment. It seemed as if she could have listened for ever, but was unable to reply during several minutes of agitated silence, till at length, with a strong effort, she said in faltering accents, yet with some of her usual vivacity.

"You said this once before, and I never forgot it. You were very dull not to read my

heart long ago. If I felt less I could say more. Be constant for two long years, and we may be happy! I need then consult no one's wishes but my own. Sir Arthur knows all. He has been entrusted with my thoughts from the first moment, when you told me that —— that our attachment was reciprocal!"

"Can it be!" exclaimed young De Lancey, in accents of the wildest joy, while, in a transport of emotion, he clasped her hand in his own, and those words were at last spoken between them, which pledged Henry and Caroline to each other for ever. "I am not then doomed to pass through life alone and uncared for. You will accept a heart that never has loved, and never can love another! I am now afraid only of being too happy! The tide of my whole existence is changed! The two years you bid me wait shall not be wasted. For your sake I shall strenuously seek to become the architect of my own fortunes, to throw off the trammels of obscurity, to carve out for myself a name which you shall not be ashamed to hear. The world is before me, where, with buoyant hopes and resolute will,

surely I may achieve something, when my ardent aim and eager hope shall be to enjoy honour first, and love hereafter. For years I have not known a moment of solitude, as your image has been my perpetual companion, and now there is no futurity of life to either of us, in which we shall not both be interested, for, believe me, no one on earth was ever loved with greater depth and constancy of attachment than yourself."

The feelings of a lifetime are sometimes concentrated in a single hour, and so it was with Henry and Caroline, who talked of the past and of the future with buoyant hopes and entire affection, but not yet with entire confidence, for it was evident that Miss Smythe, in speaking of her own connections and prospects, became agitated and reserved, while she concluded the conversation abruptly, by saying,

"I shall feel proud and happy to think, that the motive for all your exertions is derived from a generous and disinterested attachment to myself, and whether success or failure be the consequence, we shall at last share it together, for better or for worse.

All real happiness must spring from the heart! I care neither for splendour nor amusement, —they are the mere outside crust visible to the vulgar eye, but friendship and —— and attachment, founded on religion, these are the jewel in the casket, outweighing all else."

"Without them, none can know the greatest joys, or the greatest sorrows of this world," said Henry, with emotion. "For your sake I have now a thousand ambitious desires that never would have occurred to me for myself alone. If there be anything in me deserving your regard, I wish it were ten times redoubled, and that besides, I had fortune, talents, estates, and friends, beyond the utmost desires of all your connections."

"Then," replied Caroline, with a penetrating look at Henry, but in a careless off-hand tone, "if we are to suppose a shower of fairy gifts called down upon us by our own wishes, I shall perhaps ask to become, for your sake, very beautiful, very fascinating, and above all, very rich."

"You have everything already, except the wealth," said Henry, warmly; "and I should

abhor an heiress! I would not sacrifice my independence in life to any woman; scarcely even to you! A man's office is to confer, not to receive."

"Men of even very large fortune, seem, in these days, to feel otherwise," observed Caroline, smiling. "They have a sort of mercantile idea on the subject of marrying, that it would be very presumptuous in a young lady, without sufficient capital, to expect a partnership in their house!"

"I have little indeed to offer, and even that little based upon a mysterious uncertainty," replied Henry. "Yet, unless I could bestow something besides myself, and something more than I ask in return, I never would marry. It is a mean, degrading position, for any man to be a pensioner on his wife, when even the very gifts which his affection might induce him to give her, must be purchased with her own money. No! dearest Caroline, we shall be contented on very little, and we might be miserable on a great deal. Your happiness shall be my first, almost my only consideration. Our affection will be riveted by the

sacrifices we daily make for each other, till it becomes woven into our very being, while come what may, we are above adversity, and equal to prosperity, strong in mutual attachment, and in one common hope for time and for eternity."

"May we live to realize all you say," replied Caroline, with tears starting to her eyes, while a smile was on her cheek. "The picture is drawn by a masterly hand! In this world the sun itself has many dark spots, and I do not expect or hope that we shall be without our share of difficulties and sorrows; but our happiness is rooted in a soil that cannot fail, for we shall advance together in social and unlimited confidence, through the land of fleeting shadows, to the land of bright and permanent realities, of unimaginable and unceasing enjoyment."

"How different is the happiness of the Christian, from that described by the poet," said Henry.

> 'My hope, that never grew to certainty,——
> My youth, that perish'd in its vain desire;
> My fond ambition, crush'd e'er it could be,
> Aught save a self-consuming, wasted fire!'"

CHAPTER VII.

Safe from the bar, the pulpit, and the throne,
He's touch'd and sham'd by ridicule alone.

Captain De Crespigny continued to visit at St John's Lodge almost daily, having now adopted a quite-at-home style, dropping in at all hours of the morning or evening, partly in the character of a cousin, partly as a convivial friend of Sir Patrick's, and solely, in the estimation of Agnes, as her devoted admirer; but not one of the motives which ostensibly brought him there was the real one. He kept up long, animated, horse-and-dog conversations with Sir Patrick, and love-and-nonsense conversations with Agnes; but his whole thoughts and attention were secretly

devoted to Marion, to so engrossing an excess, that he became astonished even at himself. She was always exceedingly busy about something when he called—more frequently out of the room than in it, while he staid, and so constantly sat down to write letters or notes while he talked to Sir Patrick, that one day in a tone of pique, he said, writing at such a rate, she would soon be several volumes ahead of Sir Walter Scott; but still Marion continued as much preoccupied in his presence, and as good-humouredly indifferent as before. She treated him, as the friend of Sir Patrick, almost like a brother, and was not in the slightest degree agitated, when he flew with fascinating *empressement* to light the taper for her, to open the door, or to pay any of the ten thousand little attentions with which he was accustomed to dazzle and delight the hundred and one other young ladies among whom he had hitherto divided himself. It was absolutely insufferable to see her so perfectly self-possessed and conversible, without a thought of being admired, always ready with a reply when he spoke to her, and amus-

ed with his jests, but not sufficiently interested by his presence, to attempt being either attractive or repulsive. Seeing him approach the table one day several times, while she was writing, Marion said at last,

"Is there anything here I can give you? anything you want?"

"Yes!" said Captain De Crespigny, in a low agitated voice. "I do want more than I dare ask; more than I shall perhaps ever obtain!"

Marion at these words, glanced with astonishment towards Agnes, and privately thought her sister's lover must require very great encouragement indeed, if he were not satisfied with all he got; but unwilling to interfere in any differences that might have arisen between them, she calmly resumed her employment, unconscious that the eyes of Captain De Crespigny were fixed upon her with a look of disappointment and pique, because she had not so much as favoured him with a conscious blush.

Nothing surprised and amused the young mind of Marion half so much, as the light

raillery, and gay persiflage, which continually passed between her brother and Captain De Crespigny, whose conversation was enlivened with sallies of good-humoured malice against each other, and lively satire, which sometimes approached the verge, and often even passed the verge of civility, while each seemed to have conferred on his friend the royal privilege of saying or doing no wrong, so that the pointed arrows they levelled at each other, became feathers before they reached their aim.

"I must give the Abbey people a ball!" exclaimed Sir Patrick one day, after whistling for some time with his back to the fire. "The Children of the Abbey, as we gentlemen in difficulties are called! A dance of ruined people! What a capital hit!"

"Like Holbein's dance of death!" observed Marion. "Our creditors would all come, I suppose, and take out a dividend in cakes and ices! You are of course not serious, Patrick!"

"Why not! You are always ready with an opinion, like a lawyer expecting a fee: but remember, Marion, the attorney waits at

least till he is asked! I am as serious now, as I ever am about anything. Let me make the neighbours and the neighbourhood expire with envy and admiration! You know the last kick of a dying horse is always the strongest. Agnes, fetch your visiting-book, and we shall get up a splendid impromptu, to be paid for with my surplus income! Ah! here comes De Crespigny, as he always does, at the very moment we were wishing for him."

"Because there is never a moment, I suppose, that you are not wishing for me!" replied he, fixing an expostulating eye on Sir Patrick. "I owe myself to society, and make a duty of paying visits from pure benevolence, because in every house I find people perfectly dying for my arrival. If I had three hands to shake, I would divide them equally amongst you; but I have only one to offer," added Captain De Crespigny, with lively emphasis, as he extended his to Agnes, who stood nearest him.

"You belong, I believe, to the Modest Assurance Company," said she, with a blush

and a smile. "But after this little out-break of vanity, we really do want your advice."

"That is a thing I never either give or take. The word should be drummed out of the English language."

"Then," added Sir Patrick, "pray lend us your opinion."

"No, Dunbar! I lend you nothing! Remember our agreement! Can't afford bad debts! Better give you half-a-crown than lend you a shilling."

"De Crespigny! your wit is as sharp to-day as that American scythe, the shadow of which cut a man's leg off! I owe you one for the last hit!"

"Ten to one you never pay me! I have serious thoughts of taking rooms in the sanctuary myself soon, because it displays beauties and attractions beyond any other part of the world. Positively, I see no place like it, and no people like its inhabitants."

Sir Patrick's hearty laugh rang through the room, while Agnes smiled with conscious triumph; and Marion, who had been for several minutes planning an escape to the Gran-

villes, thought this a favourable opportunity to steal off unobserved, and had safely reached the door, when Sir Patrick hastily summoned her back.

"Marion! where are you shying off to so hastily? Are you under a vow of solitude? There is no keeping you in the room for a minute now!"

"Never mind me!" said Captain De Crespigny, assuming a tone of good-humoured conceit, to disguise a great deal of real pique. "I am not so bad as I look."

"No!" replied Agnes, laughing. "That is exactly what the keeper at the Zoological Gardens says of the ourang outang!"

"Don't be put out of countenance by her, De Crespigny! you'll do!" said Sir Patrick. "I've seen worse-looking people in the world! I knew a gentleman once, much plainer than you are, who got on very well!"

"Sir Patrick Dunbar, for instance, or some other, with no pretensions whatever! Really, old fellow! I am much the best looking of the two, if people would only think so. It is as-

tonishing the sort of men who pass themselves off upon the world for being handsome—quite an imposition.

"Quite!" replied Sir Patrick, and the two gentlemen laughingly glanced at each other. "I am quite obliged to you for that remark; but as I see the watch of your wit is wound up for a reply, pray let it strike."

"No! I am not revengeful! As somebody said to somebody, some day when they were talking about something, I have 'a soul above buttons!' But positively," continued Captain De Crespigny, gazing around, as if he had made a sudden discovery, and letting his eye rest upon Marion, "to do ourselves justice, Dunbar, we in this room are a remarkably good-looking party."

"To be sure we are! You never said a truer thing!" replied Sir Patrick. "So obvious, indeed, that it was scarcely worth remarking. I remember the time, De Crespigny, when you used to copy me—to imitate the inimitable; and positively, with such tolerable success, that I very nearly bowed to myself one day for you."

"Well, Patrick!" said Agnes, "I do think you are like nobody else, and like nothing human I ever saw; and yet I have a great turn for finding out resemblances. How very like Wednesdays are to Thursdays!"

"Astonishingly so!" replied Captain De Crespigny; adding, with one of his most indescribable looks, "but I see not the slightest resemblance between your sister and you.

Agnes smiled one of her brightest smiles, at what must, she thought, be intended most unquestionably as a compliment; but though the difference appeared obvious enough, the superiority, judging from the direction and the expression of Captain De Crespigny's eyes, was not by any means so decided a point as Agnes seemed willing to believe.

"De Crespigny!" said Sir Patrick, with one of his most satirical looks, "Do you really now, in serious earnest, call yourself dressed? It is very well as a joke; but you are surely not got up in that style for the day? In the name of all that is hideous, who is your tailor, that I may avoid him? Does he call that thing you wear a coat?"

"No!"

"Then pray what does he call it?"

"A surtout! and such a one as you never had since you wore a cap and cockade. It is a real original Dodds! I could bet the amount of your bill, whatever that may be, probably with several years' interest—a few hundreds—that you will never be half so well fitted. If you want a coat, a real undeniable, irreproachable coat, fit for a gentleman to be seen in, employ my tailor in St James's Street. He will make a man of you!"

"From a certain cut of tygerism in the collar, I guessed he lived in Cheapside or the Strand! Never employ him again! I would not allow him to dress me if he offered to do it for nothing! Have more regard for yourself, De Crespigny, and never be betrayed into trusting him again! He is totally incapable of his business! You might as well expect a Whig ministry to form a tolerable administration! The thing is not upon the cards!"

"Pray attend now to my cards!" interrupted Agnes. "If you are got upon poli-

tics, there will be no slipping in a word edgewise about my ball; and the joy of planning it quite turns my head."

"You turn every other head, so it is but fair that your own should share the same fate!" observed Captain De Crespigny, with a light and careless laugh; but what he said was neither lightly nor carelessly received by Agnes; for the colour rushed in vivid brilliancy to her cheek, while she bent her head to conceal a smile of pleasure; yet when Marion looked suddenly up from her drawing, the eyes of Captain De Crespigny were again fixed on herself, as he added, "I wish those I admire the most had a few imperfections to make them human!"

"I should not think any one thoroughly liked me who saw them," observed Agnes, in a tone of gratified vanity. "And now for business, Pat! Here is a correct list of our acquaintances!"

"But I want an incorrect one!" replied Sir Patrick, jocularly seizing the catalogue of names. "I hate anything correct! Let me see! Here are some tolerable people enough!

This is not a bad world after all, if one could pick out those who are ornamental, and pass an act of extermination upon all who are objectionable in manner, appearance, circumstances, or disposition. In such a case, it might really become fit for a gentleman to live in!"

Agnes' visiting-book was now carefully revised, while the party seemed to think they had met only to pass sentence on all their acquaintances. No subject appeared so exhaustless as the faults and follies of their particular friends; their poverty, wealth, avarice, or extravagance; while the liveliness of their conversation, instead of emanating, like that of the Granvilles, from the gay fancies and spontaneous sparklings of their own minds, was almost entirely derived from the follies and personal defects of others; and Marion could not but remember with a smile, the country clergyman, who said once from the pulpit, that "people should never speak ill of their neighbours, —— except among a few friends!"

"Let us invite only the tolerable-looking

girls in each family, and no chaperons with large caps and turbans to overshadow the room," said Captain De Crespigny, drawing a broad dash of his pen through the name of Lady Towercliffe. "Her large, featureless face, looks like a wax doll which had been put before the fire till it melted; and she is as dull as a dormouse."

"We did enough for her, in going to that heavy turn-out of a ball!" added Sir Patrick. "I very nearly 'struck work,' on finding myself expected to dance with one of those plain elderly daughters. Lady Charlotte is quite a *laide ideal*."

"I was pressed into the service too!" continued Captain De Crespigny, in an injured tone, "and did not recover the annoyance till —— till my last quadrille!" added he, glancing expressively at Marion. "If one must dance with plain girls at their own parties, I wish they would wear veils!"

"Poor Lady Charlotte's figure is a perfect pyramid, narrow at the shoulders, and becoming thicker to the ancles," observed Agnes, laughing. "She got no partner the first

half of the night, but being very fond of dancing, she stood near the corner of every dance, and was turned sometimes by mistake!"

"Very good for an impromptu, Agnes! The old girl gets a partner once a-year, I believe!" added Sir Patrick. "If people will not be beauties, I can't help it; but I wonder any one who had such a foot as Lady Charlotte's, would wish to live! It is so enormous that the eye cannot take it all in at once! The gout is nothing in comparison! De Crespigny, if you are ever shipwrecked at sea, you could desire no better boat than one of her shoes, and a paddle!"

"Her hand, too!" exclaimed Captain De Crespigny, shrugging his shoulders, and admiring his nails. "Mine is ashamed to look so insignificant beside it! Positively I awoke one forenoon, after my hand had been stung by a wasp, and seeing something so large, red, and swelled, I never recognised my own, but seized hold of it in the most friendly manner, saying, 'Ah! Lady Charlotte Malcolm!——"

"I have heard," observed Marion, "that the celebrated Hogarth often lamented how

completely his sense of the ridiculous had destroyed his sense of the beautiful; so that even in the face of an angel, he could not avoid observing something to caricature; and I think some of us, if we do not take care, will soon be in danger of a similar calamity."

"Well!" exclaimed Sir Patrick, eagerly, "Let me enjoy a jest to-day, even if I were to die for it to-morrow."

"You, gentlemen, are both too bad!" said Agnes, lazily extending her own beautiful foot on a footstool. "Charlotte Malcolm has already a whole tier of double chins; her throat must have once belonged to a flamingo, and her complexion is like the models we see from abroad in terra cotta; but then, to do her justice, she dresses to perfect desperation; and," added Agnes, in her most amiable voice, for she always assumed the affectation of extreme candour in discussing other young ladies, "I am told Charlotte is very good tempered; at least so Lady Towercliffe says."

"And pray, what does that signify to me!" exclaimed Sir Patrick, contemptuously. "If

there is nothing better to be said for your friend, then, Agnes, for ever hold your tongue. Amiable qualities are quite at a discount in general society! What does it matter to a man dancing a quadrille with any girl, that she is miraculously amiable, if she be miraculously ugly too! She may be a perfect termagant at home, for anything I care, provided she bring plenty of small talk into the ball room; and I would not give a single sous to know whether her milliner's bills be paid, provided only she is well dressed. I would not take such a looking girl as Lady Charlotte Malcolm for my fifth wife!"

"You have quite burned her in effigy, now," observed Marion, looking up from her work. "Suppose we start some person for variety, whom everybody must admire and praise!"

"That should be yourself, then!" said Captain De Crespigny. "Who else could answer the description!"

"I remember visiting at old Vivian's last summer, where the girls were all terrifyingly plain; their faces like the dairy-maid, and their figures like the churn," said Sir Patrick.

"One day I could not resist asking their old governess, in confidence, what could be the reason why the fourth daughter invariably took precedence of all the others, when she whispered in a confidential tone, 'because she once had a proposal.'"

"If young ladies take precedence on such grounds," observed Captain De Crespigny, with a glance towards Agnes and Marion, "I know who ought soon to leave all others behind! My cousins here have the game in their own hands; four by honours, and the odd trick."

"Young ladies had much better gain precedence by accepting offers than by refusing them!" said Sir Patrick, whistling himself off to the window. "She's daft to refuse the laird o' Cockpen!"

"I once saw a man who had been refused!" said Captain De Crespigny. "He should have kicked himself out of the world after such an adventure! From that day to this I have lived in a nervous horror of being rejected! I am the most marrying man in the world, but I never can venture to make

an offer. I do wonder how people set about it! The author who published a complete letter-writer, should give us a complete manual of proposals for all occasions! I am so horribly diffident! Even coming into a room you have no idea how much I suffer from shyness!"

"It is astonishing, then, what a good face you manage to put upon it," said Marion, dryly. "I never guessed you were at all shy!"

"No!! nor that I am a lover out of place, in want of a situation! Would it be a good plan, Miss Marion Dunbar, to advertise? You, being pen in hand already, shall write the advertisement. Describe me as made of every creature's best! How would it do to make a raffle of me! 20,000 tickets at one guinea each. How many will you take!"

"I have no money to waste," replied Marion. "But perhaps some young ladies with more, if they could be quite sure of a blank, might venture on one ticket, out of charity, hearing you are so anxious to go off!"

"I do wonder if anybody would take me,"

continued Captain De Crespigny, in a tone of careless conceit. "I have the greatest mind to try Lady Charlotte Malcolm! Do you think, Miss Dunbar, I might have any chance?"

"Not the slightest!" replied Agnes, laughing. "I could bet my longest ringlet that she would reject you at once! Charlotte complained to me long ago how forward gentlemen are—always proposing, on the slightest encouragement!"

"Remarkably true! I am positive that nine out of ten were refused last winter! We are a most unfortunate set of old fellows, Dunbar! Nobody appreciates us! I had made myself a promise to go off this season! positively my last appearance. "But,"—added Captain De Crespigny, dropping his voice into a low tone of apparent feeling, "the more I am desirous to recommend myself, the less I succeed! If it were possible for either of you ladies ever to see me indifferent about pleasing, then you would be astonished at my success. Did Dunbar never mention, that in the company of those I do not care for, I am quite another man!"

"No!" replied Agnes, blushing and smiling. "Patrick is aware that we always judge of people's merits for ourselves."

"What would I not give to hear that verdict pronounced! If you have tried me by a court-martial, you may at least let me know the sentence!"

"It would do you good, De Crespigny, to hear those girls discussing your demerits! Your vanity requires lowering a peg or two!" said Sir Patrick, with a mischievous laugh. "You owe me countless thanks for putting in a word of defence now and then to protect you, for positively they are too bad. On the score of conceit and extravagance, I undertake to be your champion. Such faults are like the spots upon ermine, rather ornamental than otherwise; but if any one says you dress ill, I have not a syllable to say. Let me advise you, as a friend, to discard that tailor! He is atrocious! It would be the utmost stretch of my friendship to be seen with you anywhere to-day, except in some rural parts of the country; so now for our walk."

"Dress as you may, Dunbar, you will never

look like me!" replied Captain De Crespigny, as they lounged off together. "It was a problem of Euclid, which we settled at Eton long ago, and may demonstrate personally now, that A B C can never be equal to D E F. Good morning, ladies! *au revoir!* we must fly. In your society I resemble the gentleman we used to read of in our school-books, whose wings were melted because he ventured too near the sun."

The more Marion saw of Captain De Crespigny, the more astonished she became at the multiplicity of his talents for conversation, and at his universal craving to be admired, while all the *petits soins* which he lavished on herself, she, as a matter of course, set down to his extraordinary vanity, which could not allow the most insignificant of mortals to escape his fascinations; but to have supposed his attentions to be indications of love, she would have considered as absurd a blunder as to mistake an oyster-shell for an oyster.

Captain De Crespigny sketched caricatures with inimitable humour, sung with taste, and with every appearance of feeling, and his ver-

satility of powers in talking were almost incredible. He discussed science occasionally with any blue-stocking, like a philosopher—looked dismal upon politics with members of Parliament—talked agriculture and fat cattle with country gentlemen—could describe the state of New Zealand, as if he had visited the country, to old ladies, with large families of enterprising sons. He was musical with the musical, sentimental with the sentimental, and apparently at home equally in poetry or metaphysics. With a smile for one, a sigh for another, and a jest for a third, his small-talk for young ladies might be minced into the smallest grains of sense or nonsense; while at the same time he could even get up a very plausible religious conversation, on the most approved model, when in company with any one like Marion, to whom he thought it might render him more acceptable. The true secret of Captain De Crespigny's almost universal popularity, lay in his appearing so flatteringly interested by whatever occupied the attention of others; and whether it were the last snow-storm, or a newly discovered

star in the firmament—an old pedigree or a new bonnet, he seemed equally ready to follow the lead of any young lady, being sufficiently delighted in his own private mind, to imagine how every word he said, and every look he looked, would be afterwards treasured and remembered by those whom he had no particular intention of remembering himself.

Marion observed narrowly and anxiously Captain De Crespigny's conduct to Agnes; but even her discernment, quickened by the most affectionate solicitude, could bring her to no conclusive decision respecting his intentions, though she could not but feel sanguine at one time, and justly indignant at another, according as the thermometer of her hopes and fears rose or fell; yet she strongly suspected that Captain De Crespigny was but indulging his own ambition—that he wished to be thought of and talked about—to become devotedly loved—to be necessary to the happiness of another—to constitute that happiness for a short time, and then to destroy it as a useless toy, which had amused him for an hour, and might be broken without re-

morse. "How different! oh! how very different from Richard Granville!" thought Marion, with a glowing smile. "To him the peace of no living mortal is insignificant; and when loved or trusted, who ever was so considerate, so totally unselfish, so free from vanity and caprice! No Christian can doubt that happiness and principle are one."

The name of any individual more than commonly interesting is apt to occur often in conversation, *apropos* to everything or to nothing; and Captain De Crespigny's penetration very soon discovered, that the Granvilles were never heard of or mentioned by Marion with indifference; therefore being anxious to fathom her secret, and to ascertain the extent of her intimacy with them, he tried the experiment one day, by professing an enthusiastic admiration for the extraordinary eloquence of "Dick Granville!" in whom he appeared suddenly to have discovered a thousand new and unheard-of good qualities, while with humorous pertinacity he defended him from all the satirical cuts with which Sir Patrick tried to lower his importance in the eyes of Marion;

but Captain De Crespigny, unconscious of the lead which he was expected to follow, rattled on in his accustomed way,

"Granville always was one whom nothing could spoil! So different from young Meredith, who used one short month since to go about with a quiet country-curate-look, but since he has become rather popular in the pulpit, he enters a room with his chin in the air, and all the self-confidence of a great lion. Weak heads are easily intoxicated."

"And people here do all in their power to ruin those they most admire, by very overdone adulation," added Agnes. "It would be a very strong fortress of humility that could withstand all the absurd mobbing which Mr Granville has to undergo."

"As Lady Towercliffe said to me yesterday, in her usual slip-slop style of talking, 'Mr Granville is so very eloquent, so benevolent, so learned, so pious, and he has such a neat foot!'" continued Captain De Crespigny, laughing. "Really, Dunbar! if you and I quarrel with everybody better than ourselves, we shall find no one left to asso-

ciate with! I have but one weak side on earth, Miss Marion Dunbar, and it is that of always standing up for the absent."

"They very often require it; and whether in jest or in earnest, I am glad you do," replied Marion, finding herself obliged to speak, while her look of agitated consciousness occasioned a thrill of jealousy in the heart of Captain De Crespigny, which brought a sudden flush into his countenance; but he assumed a careless tone, to conceal his real feelings, and turned to Sir Patrick, saying, "*à propos* of absence, the Granvilles are never here now! I remember the time when that pretty sister and my cousins were like the three graces, perfectly inseparable!"

At these words, Sir Patrick coloured to the very temples; and instantly afterwards becoming pale as marble, he stooped to pat his dog, and then impatiently whistled Dash, along with himself, out of the room first, and finally out of the house; while Marion's eye was turned towards Agnes, with a deep and searching look of enquiry and astonishment.

CHAPTER VIII.

—— Oh! and is all forgot?
All school-day friendship, childhood innocence?
SHAKESPEARE.

NOTHING had ever surprised and annoyed Captain De Crespigny more than the unadmiring indifference with which, week after week, Marion received his visits. Her easy good humoured courtesy of manner was unpardonable! No peculiar consciousness became visible in her manner, when he addressed her; no accession of sensibility in her voice; no agitation in her smile; no increase of her natural timidity; no desire of captivation, nor the slightest coquetry in displaying her own fascinations.

To be thus treated like a cousin or a brother, was mortifying in the extreme, and appeared to him perfectly unaccountable, because he little guessed the contrast which incessantly presented itself to Marion's mind, between the low, every-day tone of his thoughts, on all the essential objects of existence, and the elevated sentiments or generous feelings, to which she had lately become accustomed in the society of Mr Granville. Captain De Crespigny's conversation always diverted her on account of its eccentricity; but in the selfishness and vanity he inadvertently betrayed, she saw how little he could know the real nature and value of that happiness springing from principle and affection, which alone could satisfy her heart.

Formerly, Captain De Crespigny would have gloried in surmounting difficulties, if he had ever found any difficulties to conquer; and now he was determined not to become discouraged, though he felt, if such a thing could be possible, almost humbled. His eye followed Marion wherever she turned, and he was now for ever by her side, though she

evidently made it her continual business to avoid him, as she had latterly become more aware than before of his assiduity.

Fortified by the consciousness of her own secret engagement, and by the knowledge that Agnes had a well-founded belief in his attachment to herself, Marion's countenance, which told every transient emotion of her heart, never betrayed a thought of love; and it seemed to Captain De Crespigny as if her heart must be of granite, so cold and hard beneath a smiling stream. She was long of even suspecting the worst, and would not fully believe when she did, that his volatile fancy had really changed; yet a spell seemed over her, that she could not escape from Captain De Crespigny's society, without giving offence to Sir Patrick and Agnes, who both, for different reasons, insisted on her being present when he called, though, unlike her sister, who would have sacrificed every one to herself, she would have sacrificed herself for every one, and only thought with considerate affection, how she could best spare the feelings of Agnes, and at the same time

escape from occasioning any jealousy, the fear of which now haunted her like a perpetual night-mare.

One morning, when Agnes was seated in a state of exceedingly full-blown satisfaction, expecting Captain De Crespigny's usual visit, and considering him as much her own property as either her reticule or her work-box, she observed Marion, who had occupations for every hour of the day, hastily gather up her drawing materials, and glide towards the door, evidently anxious to escape without observation, but in vain.

The barometer of Agnes' countenance had become exceedingly stormy, while watching Marion's progress; and being one who rather enjoyed the excitement of a quarrel than otherwise, she asked Marion in a voice raised an octave higher than usual, which sounded as sharp and cutting as an east wind, where she was about to go, adding, in her most sarcastic tone,

"Pray inform me, Marion, why I am to be left in solitude here, when everybody knows that in a place like this I cannot possibly re-

ceive visitors alone. One would suppose that you wished to prevent me from seeing Captain De Crespigny this morning."

"By no means, Agnes! But is there any occasion for me to remain, when Patrick of course accompanies him here as usual."

"Nonsense, Marion! You know perfectly well that Patrick may or may not be here, for that all depends on whims like your own, and nothing renders it correct to receive gentlemen in the morning, except there being two of us at home. I expected more friendship and consideration from you; but people never will think of any one but themselves!"

"You are like a Hebrew scholar, and always read me backwards, Agnes! I have only to know your wishes in order to comply with them," replied Marion, good-humouredly reseating herself, and adding with a beautiful timidity of manner and voice, "I cannot but think that, until you are actually engaged, it would perhaps be better if —— if —— Captain De Crespigny's attentions were not to —— to be at all divided."

"Divided!!" exclaimed Agnes, looking per-

fectly sublime in her anger. "What can you mean?"

"Excuse me, Agnes!" replied Marion, trying to steady her voice, and to hide her confusion. "I mean that Captain De Crespigny has the reputation of being a confirmed flirt; that I hope and trust, if it be really for your happiness, he is, as you think, irretrievably attached and engaged to yourself; but if a housemaid enter the room, he cannot resist attempting to look handsome, and to attract her admiration; therefore you cannot but suppose he will endeavour to waste some of his fascinations occasionally upon me, and till he is my brother, I would rather avoid any such absurdity."

"Your meaning is plain enough now, and requires no interpreter!" said Agnes, with an angry toss of her head. "Every one must see and know, that Captain De Crespigny is exclusively and entirely devoted to me."

"That is a point, Agnes, of which no third person can be an adequate judge," replied Marion, evasively; "but I am as anxious to believe it as yourself."

"If you entertain any fear of causing me a disappointment, make your own mind perfectly easy, as mine is. If Captain De Crespigny could hesitate a moment between us, I should scarcely think him worth living for, and still less worth dying for. Be assured I shall never endure a moment's uneasiness on your account. Here he comes, regular as the rising sun, and quite as welcome!"

After all the lively badinage of Captain De Crespigny's first reception was over, Marion quietly retreated into the deep embrasure of a window, where her work-table stood, and busied herself with answering some notes, while almost entirely shaded from observation; yet still Captain De Crespigny's eye incessantly wandered to the place where she sat, for there was something unintentionally *piquante* in the total indifference with which she thus secluded herself from his attentions and civilities. Observing, at length, that Marion had begun carefully pruning the dead leaves from a bouquet of rather drooping flowers, which seemed still vainly affecting to look fresh and gay, he broke off in the middle

of a sentence from Agnes, and clandestinely approaching the table when Marion was looking in another direction, he stole them all away, and substituted one so fresh and fragrant, that Marion uttered an exclamation of rapturous admiration. She neither blushed nor looked down, however; but as if it were no more than an every-day civility, held it up to Agnes for admiration, and endeavoured to attract her towards the table by the perfume of her beautiful flowers.

"Nothing withered or blighted should ever be here," said Captain De Crespigny, in his most sentimental tone. "I should like, in one respect, to resemble flowers, which give nothing but pleasure to all who see them! Are you writing prose, or is this Poets' Corner? If I had the pen of Moore, I could find one subject for my muse more beautiful than any he ever wrote upon, and feelings more deep than he ever expressed! My eyes have ached for the last half hour with trying to see you; and half my eye-strings are cracked with looking from so great a distance."

Marion was now seriously annoyed, and a

glow of indignant vexation mantled upon her cheek; but Captain De Crespigny, mistaking her blushes and silence, began to flatter himself that the fortress was not so impregnable as he had feared. A scrap of paper lay on the table, which Marion had carelessly flung aside, after trying a pen, by writing down several times her own Christian name, and Captain De Crespigny having picked it up, laughingly added to it the name of De Crespigny.

"How does this look?" asked he, shewing her the signature of "Marion De Crespigny," while a gleam of light shot through his dark eye-lashes. "This is a valuable autograph, which I shall certainly preserve! The signature is not yet a common one, but I hope it may become so, as no other looks half so well to my eye—or to my heart."

"There may be another that I should very much prefer," replied Marion, decidedly, while the bright carnation mounted to her cheek, and she turned her large eyes towards Agnes, who stood at some distance placid and secure, in the certain belief that her own supremacy was established, and that the conversation

probably related to herself. "Give me back that paper, Captain De Crespigny, for it contains a mischievous forgery—a name that never can exist upon the earth."

"But it may in fairy-land, and it shall!" replied he, with undaunted pertinacity. "The fates are perpetually weaving people together, and may do something for me! When we are unwillingly separated for a short period, sometime hereafter, I shall every day see this name appended to the most interesting accounts of your garden, your lap-dog, and ——"

"And my sister!" added Marion, coldly. "She is always the first object of interest to me. Agnes! do come here and admire the last few stitches I have added to this Bible-cover."

"How well it will look at Beaujolie Park!" muttered Captain De Crespigny, almost inaudibly, in that low musical voice which had generally been irresistible, and with a significance of manner which Marion seemed not to remark. "I hope one day to see it there."

"I intend it as a present to Agnes," re-

plied Marion, dryly. "That and the prayer-book are both for her dressing-table."

Captain De Crespigny, assuming a look of respectful despondency, examined the volumes during several minutes in silence; but having accidentally opened the service of matrimony, he smilingly pointed it out to Marion, saying he hoped this might be considered a good omen, and doubling down the page, he placed the prayer-book opposite to her, saying, "Let me request you will study that till we meet again, as I wish to ask your opinion of it."

Before Marion had time to reply, or to hurry away, as she had been for some time projecting, Agnes advanced with an air of exceedingly forced vivacity, while there was a perceptible flutter of anger in her tone, and Marion felt as much confused as if she had been guilty of a real indiscretion, when she saw that her sister's face had become as white as the wall, her eyes glassy, and her manner unusually excited, though she tried to assume a careless tone, saying,

"What is all the world talking about here?

Captain De Crespigny! you must have learned the whole mysteries of worsted work by this time!"

"I was merely shewing your sister that most interesting of all compositions, the marriage service," replied Captain De Crespigny, throwing as much meaning into his voice as it could carry, "and mentioning that the fashionable blacksmith for these occasions now is my cousin, the Dean of Chester.

Agnes looked down with an interesting blush, and Marion looked up with a start of astonishment, at the hardened intrepidity of manner in which Captain De Crespigny carried on his double game, adapting his tone equally to suit either or both of his companions; and it was with a sensation of extreme relief that she saw him at last rise to take leave, looking most charmingly distressed; but he had glanced at his watch, "never being able to measure time at St John's Lodge," and an unlucky engagement obliged him to depart.

"All engagements are unlucky," observed

Agnes, impatiently. "I never made one yet, without afterwards finding it a tyrannical restraint."

"There is only one engagement I ever wish to make," replied Captain De Crespigny, in a sentimental voice, but carefully looking at nobody. "I hope soon to make an engagement for life!"

"What is all this!" exclaimed Sir Patrick, entering the room. "Can De Crespigny not be persuaded into remaining with you two or three hours longer, girls?"

"We have not yet tried the experiment," replied Marion, seeing Agnes unwilling to speak. "I intend to be busy this morning reading your favourite character in Shakspeare, Malvolio. He had the very common fault of over-estimating himself."

"To some people that is impracticable!" replied Captain De Crespigny, with a self-satisfied smile. "The world really spoils me for one."

"Perhaps," observed Sir Patrick, "you flatter yourself, and that is the most dangerous of all flattery."

"Not to me! I only wish it were possible for me to think as much of myself as every body else does."

"I hear old Doncaster is likely to make a die of it soon; therefore wait till you are established at Beaujolie Park, and then you shall see how much we all think of you!" replied Sir Patrick, laughing. "I hope you mean to be the most hospitable Marquis in the whole peerage of England?"

"Most undoubtedly! Hospitality is my weakness, if I have any! Dunbar, my very dear friend, I make a point of your coming to dine with me once a-year at Beaujolie Park! I am sorry it will not be in my power to offer you a bed; but the Highflyer passes my door at nine every evening. I wish for a very long visit from you! We are old friends, my good fellow! so I must really stretch a point! I am quite serious! therefore come by the early mail to breakfast, and take the evening one for your departure! I always was, and always shall be the most hospitable man upon earth! Have you half a moment to spare to-morrow? I want you to

help me in my bargain for a bay horse with Duncombe of ours. He has the prettiest sister in the world, if that will be any inducement to come. I wish he would throw her into the bargain! Good morning! I could not stay a minute longer to save all your lives!"

"How I do sometimes hate Captain De Crespigny!" exclaimed Agnes, with angry vehemence, after he had made a very conceited exit from her presence, accompanied by Sir Patrick, while she watched him from the window, as he sprung upon his horse, and galloped out of sight. "I know he is perfectly devoted to me! I cannot allow myself to doubt it! My whole happiness in life is cast on that die, and must not be lost! No!" continued she, speaking to Marion in a tone of unwonted perplexity, "it would indeed be a disgraceful triumph, to awaken in my heart affections which, if they must die, I shall die with them. My hopes and feelings appear all frozen into icicles this morning; yet I can scarcely tell why! A sensation of utter discouragement torments me! What is man!

and what is woman who trusts him! If all my happiness is now torn up by the roots, I shall never again incur the grief of forming any earthly plan! I shall continue for life a bankrupt in hope and peace! Do not speak to me, Marion! Do not look as if you believed the worst! I will not hear it! I know you wish to say and do all that is kind; but I detest sympathy! I abhor being pitied! and I will not be advised."

Even after she had retired to the gloomy solitude of her lonely room, Agnes buried her face in her hands, as if she would hide herself from the whole world, and struggled to banish thought; yet the suspicion would force itself into her mind, that Captain De Crespigny intended to treat her as she had seen him treat others; and though formerly she had often laughed at the credulity of those girls who believed half the rubbish he talked to them, now she repeated to herself all his professions of admiration, his looks, smiles, inuendoes, implied flattery, and openly expressed interest, till her cheek regained its bloom, her eyes their brightness, and she looked into her

mirror with perfectly restored self-complacency, and with renovated confidence in the truth, honour, and sincerity of Captain De Crespigny.

CHAPTER IX.

> And if I laugh at any mortal thing,
> 'Tis that I may not weep.
>
> BYRON.

ONE of the best receipts for happiness in this world is, to make the utmost of small pleasures, and the very least of small vexations, which was the plan on which Marion invariably lived; and it often seemed as if all the duties of affection and friendship were written with a sunbeam on her mind. She now resolved, with characteristic kindness and good sense, that as her presence at St John's Lodge could do no good to her sister, it should at least do no harm; therefore she determined if possible to obtain leave of absence for a few weeks from home, and to ex-

plain in writing to Agnes, her own opinion of Captain De Crespigny's conduct, and the reasons on which it was grounded; being convinced that in all the important affairs of life, perfect frankness between friends is, however painful, an imperative duty, and that no one, on any occasion where he has to act or to feel, should be left in the dark as to his own actual position.

With a somewhat tremulous voice, and heightened colour, Marion proceeded next morning into her brother's private sitting-room, where, surrounded by a perfect armoury of rifles, double-barrelled guns and pistols, she found him selecting his weapons for a pigeon-match to "come off" that day, between himself and Captain De Crespigny, of whose arrival he was in momentary expectation; and he seemed by no means inclined at first to lend her much of his notice.

"I came to mention, Patrick, that if you have no objection, it is my wish to spend a fortnight now, with uncle Arthur," said Marion. "We have met very seldom of late,

and Henry De Lancey is going off soon to join the army. Did you hear that a commission in the same corps as Captain De Crespigny, has been sent to him lately by his unknown friends. The regiment is going soon, I am told, to Canada, but he is to join the depot for some months at Portsmouth."

"Well! but what does all this matter to you! I shall not give my consent if you were to ask me till midnight!" exclaimed Sir Patrick, peevishly; for he felt by no means disposed that his house should lose the attraction of Marion's resplendent beauty. "If Sir Arthur in his dotage, chooses to make himself ridiculous about this anonymous youth, is that any reason why the whole family must go wild about him? Besides, Marion, you confessed long ago, that Mr Granville visits at our uncle's; and I am determined that you shall learn to know your own value better than to take him! What has he to offer you but that trumpery little cottage, like a Tunbridge-ware work-box, a kitchen garden stocked with cabbages, or gooseberry bushes, and to live upon brown bread and water. But I

begin to suspect, Marion, that you are one of the very few people in this world who like their own way; therefore it is my duty to keep you here out of danger."

"I wish to escape a danger, rather than to encounter one," replied Marion, with an ingenuous blush. "You know, Patrick, that I consider Agnes almost engaged to Captain De Crespigny. It would be a very great disappointment to me, and I think to yourself, if, after all that has passed, he become merely general in his attentions—shewing no preference for one of us more than for another. You always wish me to be in the room when he calls, —— and —— and ——"

"Oh! I understand!" exclaimed Sir Patrick, fixing his hawk's eyes on Marion, and trying to conceal a smile beneath a look of stern interrogation. "Agnes is jealous!"

"No! not in the very least! I trust she has no reason—that she never can have any. It seems like vanity in me to mention the subject even to my own brother in confidence, but I will be perfectly honest. You know, Patrick, I saw no society at school. I am

not at all aware what is customary; but your friend often says things to me that I am sure he would not like Agnes to hear."

"You are young and green in this old world, Marion, if you fancy that Agnes is ever to catch such a will-o'-the-wisp as De Crespigny. *Il s'aime, et n'à point de rival.* He plays with hearts as if they were shuttle-cocks; and indeed some hearts are little better. It is an absurd affair of vanity on both sides, and the sooner the thing goes off now the better. I know you are a perfect coward in giving pain, and that Agnes considers herself sole proprietor of De Crespigny's attentions; but who made her so? That bubble will burst before long; and if he is inclined to try a little harmless flirtation with you, what occasion is there to go off at a tangent about that, I should like to know! I must insist, Marion, on your doing all that is possible to make this dull, out-of-the-way house of mine, agreeable to my friends, for it is impracticable to exist here without society, which is the best weapon to kill time with. I shall take it as a mark of your sisterly kindness,

to receive De Crespigny as all other young ladies receive him everywhere. If he only opened his mouth wide enough, I know at least a dozen of girls who would jump down his throat, and '*il faut jouer le jeu, selon les regles de la societé dans laquelle vous etes forcé de vivre.*' My deepest resentment shall rest on either Agnes or you, Marion, if my most intimate companion be banished from our society, either by the one liking him too much, or the other too little."

"But, Patrick! if you think Agnes lays too much stress on Captain De Crespigny's very marked attentions, and lover-like language, why do you not warn her against becoming really attached to him?"

"Pshaw! nonsense! She will come to her senses soon, if she has any senses to come to. Agnes' hopes are all certainties; and she expects by shutting her own eyes, that everybody else shall become blind; but she or any one might see with half an eye, that De Crespigny cares no more for her than the poker does for the tongs. Agnes has been given to expecting impossibilities from childhood, when

she used to be angry at her wax doll for not answering her when spoken to. If she did not flatter herself so egregiously, the flattery of De Crespigny would do her no harm. His love affairs flame up and go out again like a lucifer-match box."

"Yet, Patrick," replied Marion, trying to steady her voice, and to look excessively firm, "I must make a point of going for one week to uncle Arthur. If Agnes is to be disappointed, let me not have any part of the blame, either from her, or from myself."

"My good Marion! what trash you talk! It puts my mustachios out of curl to hear you! Agnes is no more engaged to De Crespigny than I am to Mrs Penfold! There is no necessity on that score, for your becoming a porcupine, and setting up your quills at my friend. *Il n'à fait, que remplir son rôle de jeune homme.* Agnes thinks every partner at a ball would gladly become a partner for life; and if any one of them were to mention the ring of Saturn, she would consider it a proposal; but her lovers all drop off like nine pins at last. Many a time she has seen the

'decline and fall' of her empire already, and it will be the same thing now in De Crespigny's case. 'Old birds are not caught with chaff."

"You mean that the chaff is Captain De Crespigny, of course," replied Marion, with reproachful gravity. "But the subject might have been illustrated with a more graceful allusion to Agnes' lovers."

"As for Agnes's lovers, no one can tell who they are; yet depend upon it De Crespigny is not in the number. As usual, she is always flirting with the wrong man! Agnes has about as much chance of him as of the man in the moon!" continued Sir Patrick, with increasing vehemence. "She might as well attempt to overtake last year! Open the door of your understanding, Marion, and listen to me: De Crespigny will no more propose to her, than you will to the Archbishop of Canterbury! Anybody may see he is merely amusing himself!"

"Then he deserves to be hanged!" replied Marion, indignantly. "Surely, Patrick, you should not have allowed this to continue so

long, and to go so far, under your own eyes, unless you really believed that Captain De Crespigny was as much attached to Agnes as she certainly is to him."

"Or at least to his future title and estates! My dear friend, one would suppose you had swallowed a whole circulating library this morning! Are you a believer in broken hearts? My good Marion, they were exploded long ago, like ghosts and witchcraft! Nobody now dies of love, except on the stage! You do not actually suppose Agnes will expire with the disappointment! She knows better! Why, Marion! you must expect to go through half-a-dozen such affairs before you get safe into the harbour of matrimony."

"I hope not! My heart would not stand quite so much breakage," replied Marion, colouring and laughing, while she added, in a lower tone, "besides which, it is already in very safe keeping. I have given it away, you know, Patrick, once for all!"

"Pshaw, Marion! None of your sentimental vagaries! Your attachment is, of course, to be a *chef d'œuvre d'amour;* but nothing lasts

for ever now! If there were no disappointments in such love-in-a-cottage affairs as yours, what would become of poets and novel readers? Agnes understands the game of life better than you do. In her estimation it is like a rubber at whist, where hearts are trumps, and the prize a good establishment in common with the first partner who offers. De Crespigny knows all this, and cannot be expected to place any great value on a second-hand heart, much the worse for wear. The intimacy between them has chiefly arisen from our relationship, he being her cousin only once removed."

"I wish he were removed altogether. Captain De Crespigny ought to suffer all the bitterness of disappointment himself, when his insatiable vanity inflicts it so heartlessly on others."

"Suppose you take that method of revenging Agnes!" replied Sir Patrick, with a penetrating look. "He is the best catch going, and very civil to you. De Crespigny's attentions are an honour to any one, and would be quite a feather in your cap."

"So he seems to think; but I have no desire for such feathers. I make it a rule," said Marion, archly, "never to refuse any gentleman till he has proposed; but the honour of making him miserable for life never can be mine, though he so well deserves it. I suppose, being a Roman Catholic, he has bought an indulgence for deceit, or I should rather say falsehood."

"What old-fashioned bread-and-butter ideas you have, Marion! Everybody has been ill-used by somebody, and nobody minds it now. Agnes will continue incurably heart-broken till some new lover pays his devoirs, and then you will understand her better, Marion. *On garde long temps son premier amant quand on n'en pas un second.*"

"I judge of her by myself; and if once so cruelly deceived as she is, Patrick, my heart could never venture on any second attachment—never! Once awakened from such a dream, I neither could nor would attempt to dream it over again. My ideas of mutual attachment are not borrowed from novels or poems, because I never had time to read one

at Mrs Penfold's, but from conceiving what it might be to have a companion for life, from whom no thought should be concealed, and all my happiness derived. Who could ever place such trust in Captain De Crespigny, if he has really, as I may say, swindled Agnes out of her time, thoughts, and affections, without intending amply to repay them with his own? I am rapidly disliking him, Patrick; and the longer we talk, the more anxious I become for your leave to be out of his way entirely. Depend upon it, I shall be excessively rude to your friend the next time we meet; so pray let me go to-morrow."

Hearing a slight noise, Marion looked round, and she would have felt it rather a relief at the moment if the floor could have opened under her feet, when, with a gasp of consternation, she beheld Captain De Crespigny standing in an attitude of perplexity and irresolution near the door, evidently for once in his life feeling almost awkward, and very nearly abashed, though a moment afterwards he regained his usual matchless intrepidity of countenance and manner, when Sir

Patrick advanced with extended hand to welcome him, saying,

"Ah! De Crespigny! is that you?"

"The same, and no other!" replied he, bending his riding-whip till it nearly broke; but assuming an Irish accent to conceal his annoyance. "The top of the morning to you both! How is every inch of you?"

"Very tolerable indeed! It always does me good to be astonished, and certainly your apparition came rather unexpectedly. It made my mustachios perfectly stand upon end; and Marion will not require a stroke of electricity for some time after this! She seems rapidly petrifying into stone!"

"Miss Marion Dunbar! if my presence be unwelcome, I wish it were possible to dissolve away in the likeness of a sigh!" said he, with a comic smile. "Shall I invite myself to sit down, or will any one else do so?"

"If you are so exceedingly ceremonious, perhaps Marion ought to reach you a chair," replied Sir Patrick, while his face became perfectly crimsoned with trying to suppress a burst of laughter, when he observed the

graceful timidity of Marion's manner, contrasted with the easy assurance of Captain De Crespigny's, who looked at her with undisguised admiration. "I had been inwardly betting with myself for the last half hour that you would drop in exactly as you did. Here is an undeniably fine day, so that ends all discussion of the weather; and now for our pigeon-match."

"Any match you please in this house. I have been sitting for the last ten minutes tuning your sister's guitar, and she sent me here for the strings. How much her dog Darling has improved in the tone and expression of his barking."

"Agnes is perfectly dog-mad since you gave her that pert ill-tempered little animal. As Lord Byron said, 'nobody need want a friend who can get a dog.' She wears a lock of his hair set in gold—has got a supply of sheets and towels for him, marked with his name—helps him before any of us at dinner—teaches him to bark Toryism—and says dogs have all the good qualities of mankind, with none of the evil. I wish those who preach

sermons against cruelty to animals, would also say a little against over-indulging them, especially in the case of lap-dogs."

"It is an amiable weakness!" observed Captain De Crespigny, in a tone that sounded very like contempt. "I suppose your sister would scarcely be outdone by Queen Henrietta Maria, who rushed through a shower of bullets to save her favourite lap-dog. I envy the whole canine race! They have, like ourselves, fox-hunting and grouse-shooting for amusement; and moreover, they are such favourites with the ladies! Horses are slaves and drudges from youth to age, bearing a yoke from which nothing can deliver them except death; but dogs generally meet with some return for their attachment, and are always believed to be sincere in what they profess. What do you say, Miss Marion Dunbar? Have I not reason to envy your estimation of Darling?"

"Marion coloured to the very temples, embarrassed by the consciousness of all that Captain De Crespigny had evidently overheard, and after saying a few inaudible words,

she would have hastened out of the room; but on looking round, Sir Patrick, who privately thought that on the present occasion there might be one too many, had strolled off to the drawing-room, and as Captain De Crespigny continued speaking, she could not, without actual rudeness, withdraw. A blush is one of the most beautiful phenomena in nature, and so thought Captain De Crespigny, when he perceived Marion's colour flitting like an aurora borealis, while for a moment she remained completely abashed, and then, with a look of apprehensive timidity, re-seated herself.

"Excuse me, Miss Dunbar!" said he, in a tone of unwonted gravity and respect, while his usual self-confident audacity seemed entirely to have forsaken him. "I became inadvertently a listener to-day, when my name was mentioned by you in terms of which I must entreat an explanation. You will think me perhaps rather too much of the free-and-easy school, if I take this liberty; but the value I place upon your good opinion and cousinly regard is such, that I shall neither

eat nor sleep till you have enlightened me respecting the offences for which I am to be thus condemned unheard."

"Pray forget all that was said! I am unaccustomed to—to conceal my thoughts!" replied Marion, trying to look particularly firm; but seeing that Captain De Crespigny still waited with an obvious resolution to obtain something more explicit, she felt herself urged on to say what, under ordinary circumstances, she would have sunk into the earth rather than utter; therefore assuming a certain haughty dignity of manner quite unusual with her, she added, "If I did not almost consider you a brother, I should not remain in the room now; but I do most sincerely regret that your name occurred in our conversation at all, and particularly in a way for which I ought to apologise."

"As for my name, Miss Dunbar!" replied Captain De Crespigny, in a rallying tone, "make any use of it you please! Take it yourself, or give it to your dog, and I shall feel honoured; but pardon me for being desirous that you, more than any other person

in the world, should understand how perfectly unfounded is the idea of my being engaged to—to any lady !"

" From all that has passed, Captain De Crespigny, and from what I have myself heard you say, I could scarcely have believed it possible that there could be any mistake," replied Marion, indignantly. " I shall never pardon myself for having betrayed such unfounded expectations; but let it be understood, that I spoke only my own thoughts, in which no other person is implicated."

" And the misapprehension was most natural—perhaps unavoidable, Miss Dunbar, considering how little you are yet accustomed to the *persiflage* of every-day society," replied Captain De Crespigny, looking perfectly irresistible. " But allow me the privilege of a cousin, to give you some little knowledge of the world as it is."

" You have done that already," answered Marion, coldly; " and I mean to be as long as possible of learning more. It certainly does not improve upon acquaintance."

" We have all much to complain of, un-

doubtedly! If the gossiping world here had its own way, I should be married to as rapid a succession of young ladies as the Sultan in the Arabian Nights! Reports grow here like hops! Old women round a tea-table make up their budget of scandal, without giving due allowance to the altered customs of society, and my name is for ever going about the world like a cricket-ball. Every gentleman asks his partners to dance now, as nearly as possible in a tone as if he were engaging a partner for life, and says all that words can express, without attaching any permanent meaning to it, provided he has never asked that one conclusive question, which I have never yet ventured to put, though most anxious soon to do so, if I had the slightest encouragement from one whom, above all others, I admire.—Madam, will you marry me?"

Captain De Crespigny said these last words very much as if he meant them now to be serious, and fixed his eyes—eyes accustomed to do wonders—on Marion, who felt the colour rushing painfully into her cheek; but angry at herself for blushing, she turned away in

silence, while he added more energetically than before,

"I would not, for all the worlds upon earth, lose one iota of your good opinion! That really is precious to me. Allow me, irritated as you evidently are, in some degree to justify myself respecting my cousin Agnes. Strike, but hear me! She knows the world, having already smiled on hundreds of admirers, and blushed for dozens; therefore I am but one in a crowd, who, like the kings in Macbeth, 'come like shadows, and so depart,' being scarcely missed in the rapid succession which follows; and, to use a vulgar proverb, 'there are some ladies with whom one shoulder of mutton very soon drives down another.'"

Captain De Crespigny paused; and had Marion been less agitated and less anxious to terminate the interview, she could have smiled at this unusual fit of humility, which made him willing, for once, to suppose that his attentions could be insignificant; but seeing that she was now about to make a hasty exit from the room, he rapidly continued, with a slight relapse into his ordinary tone of conceit,—

"I am vain enough to think that I deserve to be preferred for something better than the mere accidents of birth and fortune, with which the very meanest of mankind may be endowed; but there are ladies—observe I name nobody—who, if they were informed that a gentleman waited in the next room ready to marry them, with double my income, rank, and property, would ask no other question, but put on a veil, get up a fit of bridal hysterics, and proceed to chapel. Such intimacies as mine with your sister are like a tread-mill, always apparently getting on, but never advancing, while neither of us ever dream of going a step beyond it. Agnes is formed to be gazed at with wondering admiration—to make conquests, but not to keep them! I would no more think of being seriously in love with her, than with a piece of Dresden china in a shop window. She should be shut up in a glass case, to be admired and forgotten every day. It is not the mere symmetry of form or features that could permanently interest me," continued Captain De Crespigny, looking a million of things; but

Marion's eyes were fixed on the door, while her whole countenance was in a glow of indignant vexation, and he continued to speak with increasing ardour. "There is beauty in an icicle, and beauty in a sunbeam; but how different! Can you wonder—can you blame me—that I see the disparity in mind as much as in appearance between yourself and your sister! She is like an amusing book, destitute of interest, to be taken up with pleasure, but laid aside without regret. She might beguile a weary hour; but you would prevent the possibility of any hour ever becoming so."

"Captain De Crespigny, I know now what the *persiflage* of society entitles you to say, and it would be well for the happiness of others if they understood your ideas upon that subject as well," replied Marion, with restored firmness,—and never had she looked so tall. "You forget the confidence that subsists between sisters, and that I am aware you generally express very different feelings, which I must still hope, for your credit, are the real truth, otherwise nothing you can say shall ever convince me that Agnes is not extreme-

ly ill-treated. I only wonder very much that she cares for you at all. I have been betrayed into speaking on this subject,—I shall regret having done so as long as I live,—but I must be true to my sister now, in saying what I think of your conduct, that it has been most heartless and most unjustifiable. Let me request you never again to speak to me as you have done to-day."

"No! not till the next opportunity. You should be angry often, Miss Dunbar, for it becomes you, and is the only thing that can bring you to the level of an ordinary mortal; therefore, let me detain you by the right of cousinship, if by no other, even against your wishes, one moment longer to propose terms of peace. I am going next week to do penance at Beaujolie Park with my very long-lived and not very much respected uncle, who insists on my escorting him to Harrowgate. He may, perhaps, be unreasonable enough to detain me two months, during which it would have amused me beyond measure could I act the invisible gentleman and observe your sister; but what

I cannot do myself you may and must. If Agnes does not flirt in a young-lady-like manner with every man she meets, then I make you a very safe promise, that the rest of my life shall be devoted to her, and nothing you ever read in a romance shall exceed my devotion and constancy; but you must be honest, and if the day after my P.P.C. cards are left, you perceive her quite as happy to see Captain Digby, or Lord Wigton, or Sir Anybody Anything, as ever she was to see me, then I am to be honourably acquitted; and you will consider me entitled," added Captain De Crespigny, with one of his most expressive looks, " to seek for happiness where I could be sure of finding it, if only fortunate enough to be thought deserving; but, unless a preference be reciprocal, the expression of it is little believed or valued."

" Captain De Crespigny," replied Marion, looking a thousand ways to avoid meeting his eye, " whoever you may hereafter prefer, I can wish no greater happiness to any one than I enjoy myself, being engaged to one in whom I can place the most perfect reliance.

My brother has probably told you already, what I am always proud to acknowledge, that your old friend, Mr Granville, is attached to me, and we await only Patrick's consent to our marriage, having fortunately obtained my uncle's."

The colour mounted in brilliant hues to Marion's cheek when she spoke, for it was evidently a strong effort to do so at all, and her eyes were fixed on the ground, or she would have been astonished and shocked at the effect her words produced on Captain De Crespigny, who bit his lip till the blood nearly sprung out, while his face became for a moment pale as death; but, after fixing a long scrutinizing look on Marion's countenance to read its expression, he said, in a voice so altered from his usual tone of gay hilarity, that she could scarcely have recognised it,

"Dunbar will never consent. Impossible! He knows your value better. It cannot be. A parson with nothing but his pulpit! I never dreamed of such a thing,—never. A life of sunday-schools and clothing societies in that bauble of a cottage. Pshaw! No

girl ever ends by marrying the first man she likes, and no more will you. I shall make you prefer me in a month."

"Probably not, as I rather dislike you now," replied Marion, suppressing a smile.

"That will wear off. It is best, as Mrs Malaprop says, to begin with a little aversion. You will at last like me beyond any one in the world."

"Extremes meet sometimes; but I must explain myself once for all now, Captain De Crespigny, that no one may ever be led into a mistake. My brother wishes us to be responsible for making this house, as far as we can, agreeable to his friends, but only as Patrick's friend can I ever now have pleasure in seeing you here, as, in another respect, I heartily disapprove of your conduct, and I will not appear for one moment to participate in the sort of farce you would carry on here with myself, —— and with others. Let us be on terms of cousinly civility for the future, and never on more."

"Well then, I am satisfied to be received on your terms," replied Captain De Cres-

pigny, with an exceedingly dissatisfied look. "Let me be welcomed on your brother's account, until I can make myself welcome on my own. As for constancy in this world, it is all very right and very desirable, but, as I hope one of your admirers may soon discover,

> "Rien n'est plus commun que le nom,
> Rien n'est plus rare que la chose."

CHAPTER X.

Earth has one boon for all her children —— death.
Open thy arms, O mother! and receive me,
Take off the bitter burthen from the slave,
Give me my birth-right, give the grave! the grave!
BUTLER.

CAPTAIN DE CRESPIGNY remained in his sitting-room till a late hour the following night, looking over papers and preparing for his departure to Yorkshire, after which he seated himself before the dying embers of his fire to muse, for the twentieth time, on all that had passed between himself and Marion. More in love with her than he had ever believed it possible to be with any one, he recalled again and again to mind the thrilling tones of her voice, and the matchless loveliness of her

countenance, till at length his attention being roused by the clock striking two, he looked at the candles burning dimly in their sockets, and prepared to wish himself good night.

When about to rise, his attention was suddenly arrested by a rustling noise behind. The shadow of a figure became visible on the opposite wall; it was distinctly outlined, and began slowly to move, when, springing to his feet with an exclamation of astonishment, Captain De Crespigny's eye fell on the tall figure of a woman enveloped in dark draperies, who stood like a phantom close by his side, without speech or motion. While his eyes were rivetted in silent consternation on this mysterious apparition, gradually the cloak was thrown aside, the veil dropped, and a countenance became disclosed so white and rigid, so soul-stricken in sorrow, so utterly without life or motion, that it seemed as if nothing on the earth could have looked so supernaturally wretched. No moisture floated over her large dilated eyes, which were glassy and fixed, her parted lips were livid as death, a mortal paleness was on her forehead

and cheek, and not a sound became audible, for the grave itself was not more silent. With her emaciated hands riveted together, she stood the very image of woe; while nothing human appeared in her face but its expression of mortal anguish.

Captain De Crespigny gazed at this mysterious apparition, unable to believe the evidence of his senses. A vital horror thrilled through his heart; his eyes closed as if he would willingly have closed his vision against a sight which blasted him; but at length, by a strong effort compelling himself to speak, he said in a low, doubtful tone, "Mary Anstruther! Impossible! I was told long ago you were no more."

A few quivering, inaudible murmurs, were for some moments her only reply, as if unable yet to command herself, till at length, in a tone so low, hollow, and concentrated, that it seemed scarcely human, but resembled a dreary echo from the tomb, she said, fixing a ghastly look on Captain De Crespigny,

"No wonder you disown the wreck! I scarcely know myself in mind or body. Ages

of misery have made me the creature I am! Not want, nor suffering, nor humiliation, though these are what you consigned me to, but the bitter agony of being despised and forgotten by yourself, —— by you for whom I steeped my very soul in guilt! You start! —— You would deny this; but when the Abbé Mordaunt, to gain possession of his niece's fortune, wished me to assist in getting her driven from the house, was it to serve him that I did so? Was it for his offered bribes that I lent my aid in that guilty work! Oh no! but her child would have stood in your way, and therefore I consented. You never knew what I had done for your sake; but was it not one of the many promises you have broken, that sooner or later you would declare me —— even me, the wretched Mary Anstruther, your wife. Madness and despair drove me on! I slandered her to Lord Doncaster—got her driven from his house—made my brother believe she had misrepresented me—that she had caused our disgrace and banishment—and you know the fearful end of all. I never, never thought of blood! Oh

never! He was mad then! He has been mad ever since; and who can wonder! Her cry rings for ever in my ears, the sharpest on earth—a cry for life. It haunts me night and day! Go where I will, the shadow pursues me. A shapeless horror is on my mind! The fear of discovery follows me like a spectre! A whispering sound is in my ears, desolate and dreary thoughts, and fearful dreams, darkness, poverty, and solitude; my pillow is a pillow of fire; my brain is scorched,—wherever I turn, dead eyes are staring in their sockets at me. Oh! if rivers of tears could restore that murdered being, I might have peace!"

The wretched creature's words poured out like the rushing of a mighty torrent, while her very reason seemed stretched to its utmost verge. She leaned against a table, which quivered beneath her trembling form, while her dragged and ghastly features were turned towards Captain De Crespigny, and she fixed on him, with a look of dismal meaning, the blackest eyes that ever vied

with night. Vainly he endeavoured to withdraw his gaze from that wild and haggard countenance, or to shut his ears against the tempest of her words; but there was a compression at his heart, till his very breath seemed difficult to draw, while he listened to her almost frenzied ravings. At length in a voice of deep and solemn import, he addressed her, while the colour fled from his very lips with agitation, and a cold shudder crept through his frame:

"Tell me, Mary, I adjure you, what this all means! I have sometimes suspected that Henry De Lancey might be the natural son of my uncle; never till this moment did I fully imagine that the murdered woman was actually married. I must know all! Rather than remain in this suspense, I will ask Lord Doncaster himself. I am not a man who would inherit one acre unjustly, or sit tamely down under the suspicion that I might be swindling another out of his rights. Vague apprehensions have sometimes crossed my mind; but give me only a certainty one way

or other. If beggary itself be the consequence, I shall act like a man of honour, and let the law take its course."

"Ask nothing! suspect nothing! The dark and dreadful story is buried in her grave, never to be heard of more. It rests upon the Abbé Mordaunt's consience, and on him be the curse! Look here!" cried she wildly, throwing off her cap, while her hair, which streamed like a long banner behind, was perfectly white and silvery. "This was the work of a single day! and my heart is no less changed. The world itself has altered! Oh! who can tell the unimaginable wretchedness that surrounds me! You believed that I was dead! Would that it had been so! I wish it, and well may you!" A strange smile gleamed upon her features for a moment, and vanished. "When shall I become like the dust I tread on! When shall I find beneath the green turf a chamber of darkness, of silence, and perhaps of peace! Often, often do I ask myself why I consent to live, when there are a thousand ways of escaping to my only refuge,—death. It is a horrid

thought, but it will come. There is no future in my life! Houseless, friendless, penniless, and without hope, —— a fiery anguish is at my heart, as if hell itself were there!"

"Mary Anstruther!" said Captain De Crespigny, in a hurried tone of great agitation. "I wronged you once. I acknowledge it with sorrow and remorse. We were young indeed then, and you had no cause surely to complain of my liberality. I offered you"

——— ———

"Yes! yes! yes!" replied she with frantic vehemence, while her eyes, glazed, and without moisture, were darkened by the shadow of deep despair. "You offered me everything but what you had promised, and what alone I would accept. You took from me every blessing of life, and offered me money! I hated you for supposing me mean enough to accept it! I would rather die in the street, or perish on a dung-hill, than receive your alms. My name branded with infamy, not a roof to cover me, and not a friend in all the earth to pity me; my brother now a terror and a reproach to all who know him;

crazed myself in mind and heart, aloof from all earthly sympathy, branded and alone—what remains for me? Yet I would rather die in an hospital than owe the very air I breathe to you."

"Why, then, do I see you here?" asked Captain De Crespigny, endeavouring to steady the tremulousness of his voice. "I would serve you yet if possible. I cannot entirely forget former times!"

"Former times!" exclaimed the miserable being, with a heavy sob, while a rush of agony poured itself out in her voice, and clasping her hands over her burning eyes, tears, such as she had not shed for ages, fell like rain over her face. "Who talks of former times! You! you who made my whole life, past, present, and future, one long agony of suffering! Do you remind me of former times! Oh! bring them back! those days which seem now like a dream, when I was young, innocent, and happy! Who so gay, then, as I! whose step so joyous! whose eye so bright! who so admired! and," added she, her voice changing to a low deep tone of anguish,

"who so loved!" It was the delirium of an hour, and what am I now? Of all the wretched outcasts on earth, the most wretched; while he who made me so, thinks it degradation to waste a thought upon one so lost."

There was a pause for some moments, and she added in a deep sepulchral voice,

"A wide gulph separates us now! I know and feel that! I do not even wish it otherwise! You are courted and admired in every house, while I wander, like a solitary ghost upon the earth! A furnace of guilt and horror burns within me. No language is dark and dreadful enough to express what I endure! The fresh green turf, and the blue sky above, I dare not look upon, for they speak of days that are for ever past; of that short summer filled with hope and joy, which has been followed by this dreary, endless winter"——

Captain De Crespigny's eye quailed beneath the look of chilling despair fastened upon himself. The hurricane of her feelings had been exhausted, but there was an unearthly fixedness in the eye of Mary Anstruther. In her

voice, too, a cold, calm, almost spectral solemnity of tone had succeeded to the wild excitement of her manner. Her expression was that of a lull after a storm, the ground-swell that follows the hushing of a tempest; and she again stood as at first, pale as death, still and motionless as a corpse, while the long drapery of her cloak hung like a winding-sheet around her wasted limbs.

"If there be any thing on earth I can do for you, speak but the word, and it is done," said Captain De Crespigny, with undisguised emotion. "My purse, if you will yet accept it, is yours; but, remember your very life is at stake in coming here. I have shut my eyes already too long! I cannot conceal from my own mind that the man who calls himself Howard, and lives with Sir Arthur Dunbar, must be your brother. He has hidden himself always from me, and I should scarcely even know him if we met, but this shall not last. Tell him he must go! Once,—and once only, I may for your sake connive at his escape from justice, but let Ernest cross my path again, and no earthly power shall in-

duce me to neglect the sacred law that bids us deliver up a murderer to justice. You also, at St John's Lodge, would once have followed the example of your unhappy brother's crime. You escaped on that occasion, and I have tried to convince myself it could not be,—that you were already in another world,—but I will not, even for the sake of our early days, be made a participator in crime. Go, then, to some distant country together. The sword of the law is suspended over both your heads. Fly for your very lives! The means shall not be wanting,—and tell your guilty brother, as I tell you, that if he delays, cost what it may, —and I know the cost to me will be great indeed, justice shall have its course."

"Let me then drink my cup of sorrow to the dregs!" replied Mary, in a low deep whisper. "He will not go! No earthly power can rule him,—no terror in life intimidates him. For myself, I dread nothing now but a prolonged existence. The sooner it is ended by any hand but my own the better. Yours is indeed the fittest! That will only complete the work which you began! Give us up then to

justice! In remembrance of those days when among the green lanes of England you promised to love me,—me only till death,—deliver us up now to the rope and to the scaffold. Yes!" added she, with a look of fevered anguish, and a frightful hysterical laugh, "This is as it should be! cheated of innocence, blighted in affection, blistered in heart, trodden down with contempt, driven almost to madness, and delivered up to death! Such be the fate of all who ever trust in man!"

"Leave me! leave me!" said Captain De Crespigny, visibly shuddering. "If you desire vengeance, the sight of you, Mary Anstruther, such as you are now, is more than I can bear! Leave me!"

"Vengeance!—No!—It was for a good purpose I came, and let me not forget it," said Mary, in a low broken bewildered voice, while a gleam like sun-light on the stormy wave seemed for a moment to restore the softness and beauty of youth to her countenance. "I would save you from death! My wretched brother long ago suspected that you were the author of my ruin. That secret he never

could wring from me, and he never shall! Oh, no! I ask no revenge on you. I am grieved, even once to have reproached you; but it is done, and my tongue shall be silent in the grave before you hear it again. Ernest swore an oath,—a deep, deep oath, that if you had indeed deceived me, nothing should screen you from his vengeance. Already he was irritated, believing you wished to marry Miss Howard, and on that subject you know how long he has been crazed. Ernest never forgives, and never forgets. He lives but for revenge. He would make you drink a cup bitter as his own. On that fatal night to which I never dare to look back, the knife he used was yours,—yes! it was stolen for the very purpose, and you know its peculiar form. He intended, if detected, to accuse you as an accessary to the murder. His plans are skilfully laid, and he threatens thus to hurl you from the eminence on which you now stand in society ——

"Impossible! absurd! Nothing but derangement could make your brother imagine any mortal would believe a fabrication so atrocious and improbable!"

"It will at least excite interest, and his plans are but too well laid. My story might then become public; and little as the world thinks in general of such sorrows as mine, there are some who would pity me. Ernest has the cunning of madness; and he thinks if you and Henry De Lancey were removed, he must succeed to Lord Doncaster. If I live, his strange and deadly scheme of revenge shall be circumvented; yet beware of Ernest! Your life is not safe for an hour! Night and day,—alone or in company, at your table or in your bed, wherever you turn, and wherever you go, beware; for none but myself can tell what his love and his hatred are. I would prevent mischief for his sake, and —— and even for yours."

A dark convulsion passed over the unhappy woman's countenance,—she gazed for several moments at Captain De Crespigny in silent disastrous wretchedness, and with the livid smile of a broken heart, she disappeared.

Captain De Crespigny scarcely slept that night,—the moaning of the wind sounded dismal as the cry of departed spirits in his ears,

and when at last his eye closed in feverish restless slumber, he suddenly started up, thinking his name had been called out with a shriek of anguish, in accents to which he had long been a stranger, and unable to tell whether it had been a dream or a reality, he watched for some time in agitated silence, and towards morning fell into a deep repose.

CHAPTER XI.

Je revole en Europe, et toujours faisant de nouvelles amours, je ne m'arrête qu' autant de temps qu'elles durent, et c'est bien peu.

When Captain De Crespigny called two days after this at St John's Lodge, to take leave before setting out for Yorkshire, he looked so absent and so agitated, that Agnes became quite elated and flattered by what she attributed to his unconquerable regret at being obliged to take so long a leave of herself. She even forgave him for enquiring almost immediately what had become of Marion, and answered with careless vivacity, "She is gone to her favourite home at Portobello! Marion perfectly idolizes her uncle! I should require to attend a series of lectures on naval

tactics, and to take a course of nautical novels for a month, before I could get on with the admiral as she does! My sister talks about the battles of Trafalgar and Camperdown, as if she had fought at them herself, but really some how or other, I never can find a word for good worthy Sir Arthur!"

"And yet," observed Sir Patrick, "you never seem very much at a loss for conversation, Agnes, when I have the pleasure of seeing you! It is years, countless years, since I have entered his house, or since he has entered mine; but suppose we go down together some day, and cut out Marion at once, by doing the agreeable in our very best and most fascinating style!"

"If my uncle Doncaster were such a man, I should certainly make up to him greatly!" said Captain De Crespigny, in a tone more than commonly in earnest. "It would be well worth your while to try!"

"Sir Arthur has nothing to leave! you are quite mistaken there!" replied Agnes, inadvertently. "When we were perfect children, and all on the very best terms, he used

to say that it would be quite enough for an old sailor like him, if he could bequeath us his watch and enough to bury him! As Pat says, he might make his will on his thumb-nail. Oh! rest assured he has nothing to leave!"

"I did not suppose he had," continued Captain De Crespigny gravely. "A small income in his liberal hand, has done more good than the very largest in any other person's. It is an odd phenomenon in nature, that the lightest purse always is the most open to others, while the heavier a purse grows, the more its mouth becomes contracted! A sort of spasmodic affection, I think!"

"I wonder if it will ever be engraved on people's tomb-stones how much they die worth," said Agnes. "That would be all the good many people can ever get by their wealth, and what they are much more proud of, in this mercenary world, than of any personal good qualities."

"Young ladies are for ever working me purses, and I have nothing to put in them!"

exclaimed Sir Patrick, throwing his own up in the air, and catching it again. "Sir Arthur and I are both fighting under the banner of poverty now; and that one word expresses in a small compass all earthly annoyance."

"Oh no! There are many things worse!" exclaimed Agnes magnanimously. "What a vulgar, low, mercenary idea!—so like you, Patrick!"

"Thank you, Agnes! If your good opinion were worth a farthing, I should grudge to have lost it!"

"But Dunbar! *revenons à nos moutons*," interrupted Captain De Crespigny, trying to look indifferent. "Surely there is no just cause or impediment why we may not ride down to Portobello this morning, and call on good worthy Sir Arthur together. It is a perfect disgrace to us both that we never go near his house, much as I always have respected him, and always shall."

"This is a very sudden fit of cordiality! When did you feel the first symptoms coming on?" asked Sir Patrick dryly, while Agnes began vehemently winding some skeins of silk.

"Let me feel your pulse, De Crespigny! I am ready to bet your uncle against mine—and the odds are considerable—that half-an-hour since, you would no more have thought of paying a P.P.C. visit to old Sir Arthur, than to Lord Nelson's monument! My dear fellow! I know you,—and you ought to know me better than to suppose me capable of paying a dull penitential visit there!"

"Well! be it so! This is no time for me to recommend disinterested attentions, Dunbar, as I am on wing for Yorkshire, obliged during a whole long dreary month to play the amiable! Did you every try that experiment, Miss Dunbar?"

"Of being amiable! no, never! I am not come to that yet! Whenever people mention a young lady as being amiable, you may depend upon it she has nothing better to recommend her! I leave mere hum-drum good qualities to such people as Clara Granville."

"Omit her in your conversation altogether, Agnes! I told you already, that she must never be named here," interrupted Sir Patrick, with angry vehemence. "Why will

you continually intrude that family on our conversation?"

"I do not, Patrick! I beg leave to deny the honourable gentleman's last assertion! It is three days at least since I have so much as named Clara Gran" — —.

Before Agnes could finish her sentence. Sir Patrick, always afraid to trust his temper when irritated, as he knew the hurricane to be fearful if allowed to rage, had strode to the door, and burst out of the room, as if the very house were scarcely large enough to hold him. This *denouement* Agnes had confidently anticipated, being perfectly aware that her brother never withstood a second repetition of Clara's name, therefore she had artfully tried the experiment of producing an explosion, which might at any hazard expel him, and secure to herself a *tête-à-tête* leave-taking with Captain De Crespigny, from whom she now confidently anticipated a formal declaration.

When Sir Patrick's angry footsteps died away in the distance, it was not without some real agitation, therefore, and a great deal more assumed, that Agnes allowed her long

dark eye-lashes to droop over her cheek, and called up a rather ostentatious blush, while she sat for several minutes in silent embarrassment; but though Captain De Crespigny assumed his most fascinating expression, he seemed resolute not to begin the dialogue; and while affecting to be considerably embarrassed himself, an arch smile nevertheless glittered in his eye, and played about his mouth.

"Is it true," asked Agnes at length, in a subdued voice, and without looking up, "that you are actually going for some months to-morrow? I must tie a knot on my pocket-handkerchief, not to forget you during so long an absence!"

"I would much rather tie a knot of a different kind!" said Captain De Crespigny, in his usual rallying tone. "But necessity has no law! Going! going! gone! Positively for the last time! Knocked down to Miss Dunbar. A great bargain! The best article on hand!"

"You are an admirable auctioneer, and shall dispose of me next!" said Agnes, laughingly

selecting a rose-bud from her bouquet. "I must give you something to take away, very beautiful, and which I am sure you will like!"

"That must be yourself, then!" replied Captain De Crespigny, looking most cruelly charming. "I hear the young ladies are all to wear black crape on the left arm, after my exit! I did expect a public dinner from them, but that is too common-place. My tailor received one lately, on removing from one street to another, and the waiter at Carlisle on retiring from his profession. I wonder nobody ever voted me a testimonial! My speech on the occasion would be exquisite!"

"Patrick thinks you very much addicted to making speeches," replied Agnes, with sly emphasis. "I suppose, as you are setting out so suddenly, that Lord Doncaster is seriously ill now! A number of old people have died off lately! He must be two hundred at least, for I have heard of him so long! I remember three years ago, hearing that his memory had failed."

"Not at all—not in the very least! He thinks himself younger and handsomer every

year! He is actually addicted still to flirtation in all its branches. He told me the last time we parted, that many ladies, if he chose, would prefer him to me! Perhaps they might! I daresay he was in the right! We never grow old in our family! never!—and we have all excellent memories," continued Captain De Crespigny, fixing his dangerous eyes on Agnes. "Mine will be stored with many never-to-be-forgotten recollections of the last few months, 'remembered,' as public orators say, 'till the latest moment of my existence.' Memory has put all these scenes in her pocket for me, to be enjoyed hereafter; and how delightful would a lifetime be, made up of such hours as I have spent in this house. I feel myself striking root in it, like a cutting of geranium!"

"Indeed!" replied Agnes, smiling most benignly; "geraniums are very great favourites of mine; very great indeed, so I wish you were metamorphosed into one."

"If all the events of life could be modelled on a plan of my own, what a pleasant little place the world would be!" said Captain De

Crespigny, admiring the polish of his boots. "I might then continue here some time longer as a volunteer in the corps of your victims, who are as numerous now as a disbanded army. Do pray let us call over the muster-roll of your admirers and count them! I could die in my chair with curiosity to know how many they are!"

"Not above three or four cases of life and death," said Agnes, laughing. "But you jest at scars who never felt a wound."

"I most heartily sympathize with them all," replied Captain De Crespigny, with an extra-sentimental sigh. "I have gone through every sorrow of life myself,—outraged affections and all that sort of thing! You cannot conceive, Miss Dunbar, how like we victims are sometimes to the frog in the fable, inflated with empty hopes."

"I must shut my eyes to that."

"Your eyes should never be shut. They are much too beautiful! With respect to your admirers, they might say, like the weather-cock to the wind, '*Si vous ne changez pas, je suis constante!*' The whole world has

been pulling caps for you all winter, and you pretend to have limited yourself to three or four victims. Impossible! You are concealing the half of them. Forgetting Captains A——, B——, C——, and D——. I have as many young ladies as that dying for me. Now, do let us run over an authentic list of their names. Show me all your court-cards at once. I could bet the finest camellia at Loddige's, that you do not name them all."

"Who shall I say," exclaimed Agnes, getting up an extempore blush, and her archest smiles. "I have a most inhospitable memory for bores, and shall forget two thirds of them. Captain Digby slightly wounded,—Colonel Meade pierced through the heart,—Captain O'Brien slowly recovering,—Mr Deveril despaired of,—Lord Wigton" ——

"Killed outright!" interrupted Captain De Crespigny. "You mention him in rather a more relenting tone than the rest, like Bonaparte, when he wept over one wounded man after condemning hundreds to death. But are you come to a period already. Is there no other worthy of remembrance?"

"Only one, whom I cannot name!" replied Agnes, turning away. "Last, but not least."

"Ah! some poor fellow with nothing, I suppose. Waiting, perhaps, for the death of a rich relation; but those tiresome old bores always live for ever, and a day besides. Whoever he is, let me advise you not to think of him; a man should as soon ask the sun in the hemisphere to wait for him, as a young lady in the full blaze of her beauty and attractions. No, no, Miss Dunbar, take my advice! Be like time and tide. I have a real cousinly interest in your welfare, and should be delighted, on my return, to find this room fragrant with cake, and glittering with favours. I shall come down on purpose if you ask me. I positively shall!"

If a look could kill, Captain De Crespigny must have withered away beneath the glance of Agnes' eyes, which streamed with indignant flashes of anger and surprise; but unconscious, apparently, of being otherwise than most agreeable, he continued in his most captivating manner.

"I must be off now to Macleay's. Half a dozen friends are dying to obtain a likeness of me, and a deputation of ladies made me promise lately to sit for them. I wonder what can induce me to take so much trouble," added he, with a gay triumphant laugh. "The painter is quite afraid he shall be robbed and murdered for it!"

"Humility is not certainly your cardinal virtue," said Agnes, with a look of angry scorn, which few could have withstood. "You cultivate an extensive acquaintance."

"Very! I must really see whether people can be induced to cut me, for it is exceedingly troublesome. I know sixty-four families with three young ladies in each. It would puzzle the calculating machine to make out how many that amounts to. But, meantime, I must unwillingly say the most hateful of all words,—farewell. I have been putting off time here, expecting Dunbar for the last half hour, though little able to afford so many minutes. My idiot of a watch must surely be too slow, or your brother would have been back about the sale of mad Tom. I have twenty minds

to buy him, if Dunbar did not ask so very long a price."

"You are intending, I believe," asked Agnes, "to enter him for the —— the Chiltern Hundreds?"

"Not exactly! but the Doncaster St Leger. He would be the first horse in that line, though asses are perfectly accustomed to them. Good morning! *au revoir!* I mean to Londonize for a few weeks, then go to Paris, and afterwards disperse myself over every corner of the uncivilized globe. Can I do anything for you anywhere? Geneva velvets? Parisian bonnets? Swiss muslins? I am at your service in every quarter of the world. May I beg my very best regards to your sister."

So saying, Captain De Crespigny bowed himself out of the room, with very much the air of a popular actor who expects three rounds of applause, and Agnes having, with a face as unmoved as if it had been enamelled, coldly given him her hand, with an ill-supported smile on her quivering lip, wished him a pleasant journey, and turned almost haugh-

tily away; a bolt of ice seemed to have fallen upon her heart, and in that small moment was comprised the agony of ages; but the greatest wonder in nature is the entire self-command given to many, and especially to women, by means of which they can hear what involves the happiness of a life-time, and yet betray no visible emotion.

The strongest feelings on earth never are discovered. Feeble minds can conceal nothing, but those who have strength of mind to suffer most deeply, are those who have strength of mind also to hide what they do endure. On slight occasions, Agnes was a most accomplished fainter; but now, having stood, with a specious smile on her countenance, till the door had finally closed, she rushed to the privacy of her own room, and closed the door, then seating herself, in all the luxury of solitude, she meditated with silent astonishment on all that had passed.

No coroner's inquest can be summoned on a deceased flirtation, and whether it die a natural death or a violent one never can be known, as it may be caused merely by some

trifling oversight, perhaps by the cruel aspersion of an enemy, or simply by whim and caprice, as in this case seemed the most probable, and to Agnes the most mortifying. Wounded in all her most sensitive feelings, a crowd of angry and depressing thoughts crowded into her brain, while she could not but feel that the arrows which had struck her were most cruelly barbed and most skilfully aimed. It was harrowing to her vain, proud spirit, to imagine that Captain De Crespigny could really be indifferent. It seemed, indeed, almost impossible! Could his carelessness be all assumed! Had he, indeed, an honourable scruple of engaging her upon the uncertainty of his uncle's demise. It might be so. Agnes felt that entire despondency would come soon enough, if come it must; and anxious to believe in Captain De Crespigny's attachment, she seemed now resolved to keep up the farce with herself a little longer. She felt certain that he had cast back a look of regret on leaving the room, which spoke volumes, and these volumes she filled up according to her own imagination. The parting had, perhaps,

been as painful to Captain De Crespigny as to herself, but what could he do if Lord Doncaster always continued to be "the undying one," standing in the way of their mutual happiness. Agnes now lived over every scene which had passed between herself and her supposed lover. She could not imagine those feelings expressed to any other which seemed created by herself alone. She recapitulated all his civilities to herself, remembered how his last sigh had been sighed, how his last look had been looked; and, after a glance at the mirror, which proved as usual an effectual safety-valve to any feelings of mortification, she became at last restored to the agreeable conviction, that the most considerate, self-denying, and constant of lovers was Captain De Crespigny.

"And," exclaimed Agnes, with another triumphant glance at the mirror, "as he said only yesterday, '*on peut fuir sans oublier.*' Let him admire any other if he can!"

> I'll still believe that story wrong,
> Which ought not to be true.

CHAPTER XII.

"Why sleeps he not when others are at rest?"

BYRON.

"Say why bareheaded you are come,
Or why you come at all?"

JOHN GILPIN.

THE intellectual powers and literary acquirements of Henry de Lancey were first-rate, and feeling a consciousness of ability, he ardently longed to coin them into fame and distinction. Full of high aspirations, there was something grand in the outline of his head, and in the expression of his speaking eyes, while animated by the desire to render himself worthy of Caroline, and to reward the care of Sir Arthur by his own exertions. He longed now to run the race of life with others—to be use-

ful among men—to win for himself a place in society—to write his name perhaps in the records of time—but above all, to promote the cause of truth, religion, and holiness. He had learned in the society of Mr Granville to believe that true happiness is not to be found in the temple of fame, nor in the temple of pleasure or of fortune, but in the temple of God; and at one time his thoughts and studies were turned towards the church, with a fervent desire to take orders, till the tide of his plans became entirely changed by the unexpected arrival of a commission in the 15th Huzzars, then quartered in Canada, which he felt bound, from whatever hand it came, to accept.

Henry had been deeply affected when first told all the peculiar circumstances of his own history, but Sir Arthur accustomed him from the first to discuss the subject confidentially, that every recollection might be preserved which he yet retained of those earlier days, now involved in impenetrable mystery, which none but himself had witnessed, but the secret of which, Sir Arthur still entertained a

sanguine hope of at last developing, while often, when gazing with almost parental affection at his promising young *protégé*, he prophesied that his unnatural connections would yet be forced or persuaded to acknowledge him.

Though lines of deep thought were already rivetted on the youthful countenance of Henry, yet his manner became full of life and animation; and in personal courage he was the boldest of the bold, displaying a fearless energy of character, which caused the Admiral to express, on the night when they were about to part, a confident hope that, though the service of his country had not been his choice, yet he was well suited to his profession, and his profession to him.

"Let me only become another Sir Arthur Dunbar, and my utmost ambition will be gratified!" exclaimed Henry, warmly clasping the hand of his benefactor. "Often,—oh how often! I shall look back upon the only home, and the best friend I have ever known!"

They were to meet no more, as young De

Lancey had engaged his place in the earliest coach next morning, and Marion saw, by the paleness of his cheek, and the compression of his lip, that though for worlds he would not have compromised his manhood by weeping, yet, moved as much by Sir Arthur's evident grief, as by his own, he had the utmost difficulty in suppressing a burst of tears.

The aged Admiral grasped his young friend's hand in silence, and leaning for some moments on his arm, he walked up and down the room with heavy measured steps, his eyes cast down, his noble forehead clouded with care, and his brows knit as in deep and painful thought. He too seemed to dread the greatness of his own agitation, being little fitted now to bear any, yet it seemed to Marion as if a tear had forced its way into his glazed and nearly blinded eyes, though carefully screening it from observation, and evidently unwilling or unable to say a word. After several minutes had elapsed, Henry broke the long silence, exclaiming, in a low tremulous tone of incoherent agitation,

" Before my voice fails, Sir Arthur, I must

speak!—I must say something, to tell you what I feel ——"

"No! no! my dear boy! I know it all! I will believe more than you can say, but spare yourself and me," interrupted Sir Arthur, in a tone of calm and serious affection. "We know each other, Henry."

"But once,—only once let me say all that has been treasured in my heart for years! Can I leave the happiest home which ever blessed a son with his father, and not remember, that but for you I should have been a friendless outcast! Every act of kindness you have shown me, every smile of regard, every token of confidence, crowds upon my memory now, and increases the store of obligations which it is my pride and my happiness to owe you. If you could but read my heart, Sir Arthur, I need not speak; for there you would see love without bounds, and gratitude which it shall ever be my delight to cherish! If I am better than the brutes that perish, you are, under Providence, the cause; and I shall be worse than the worst of them, if I ever for one hour overlook what I owe to you,

or forget the principles of honour, duty, truth, and piety that you have taught me."

Henry paused in speechless emotion, he clenched his hands together, the youthful fire of his eye became dimmed, and he hurried to the window for several moments, where, having in some measure recovered his composure, he turned round, and saw for the first time in his life, tears rolling down the face of Sir Arthur—the tears of a good and venerable man, of all sights upon earth the most affecting; and overcome with emotion, Henry took his benefactor's hand in his own, with an expression of the deepest solemnity and respect, saying, in rapid but tremulous accents,

"It might soothe the very bed of death, for you, Sir Arthur, to remember what you have done for me!—more than almost any man can ever do for another. The first of earthly blessings is to be loved; and yet, but for your kindness to me from childhood, no eye would ever have saddened at my departure, nor brightened at my return! With not a friend on the visible earth but yourself, the child perhaps of shame and misery, I must have become lost

indeed! The thought of this will be nearest my heart when it ceases to beat! If I perish abroad—or if—if we meet no more on earth, take all I can offer, Sir Arthur, my fervent prayers that you may be rewarded."

Sir Arthur mournfully held out his hand to Henry, who kneeled down and kissed it with the profoundest reverence; then starting hastily up, he seemed about to rush out of the room, when he was arrested by the deep solemn voice of the Admiral, whose eye had now become calm and steady, while in a low impressive voice he said,

"It is true, Henry, we shall probably meet no more! I know, and so must you, that this is our last interview on earth? but long after I am at rest in the grave, may you remember, and may you deserve the fervent blessing I now give you, trusting that both my children, yourself and Marion, may hereafter enjoy as bright a destiny as any child of earth can know in this suffering and sin-blighted world. In speaking of the past, Henry, do not suppose that the obligation is all on your side! No! your dutiful affection has more than re-

paid me. It is something to know that my aged years have not been spent in vain—that I leave a record in your heart, where my name will be respectfully and affectionately remembered! No man living can endure the thought of being utterly forgotten; and to you, my young friends, I commit my memory. The earth will lie lighter on my grave for the belief, that you have loved me so well, and will so truly lament me. Your young spirits have cheered my heart—your welfare has deeply interested me; and I know that one day or other, my young soldier will do me honour in his profession, and not forget to shed a tear over my remains."

Many were the tears of both Henry and Marion at these words; but Sir Arthur calmly continued in a firmer voice,

"When I called you back, my dear Henry, it was not for any vain attempt to express my feelings,—that would be impossible,—but to mention how, in all probability, you may one day be able more than to return the little I have done. It is easy for men to wrestle through the difficulties of life, and with such

talent and enterprise as yours, to conquer them all. For other reasons, too, I have no doubt of your at last being most happily settled in life, but many anxious thoughts beset me respecting Marion. The uncertainty of Richard Granville's prospects, and the certainty that my nephew will refuse his consent to her marriage, weighs heavily at my heart. I do trust that a long life of happiness awaits you both; but if my worst anticipations were ever to be realised—if your brother, Marion, a bankrupt already in fortune and character, were hereafter to desert you—if your sister, heartless and vain, should throw herself away, and leave you in bleak and sorrowful loneliness,—then remember, Henry, my solemn and last injunction is laid upon you, to act as a brother towards Marion,—much may then be in your power—more than you now expect—and you must then protect her as I would have done myself, considering all that you may ever do for her, as done for me."

"It would be something to live for, if I had a hope of being useful to Marion, Sir Arthur! Under any circumstances that would

have been a pleasure; but now it has become ten times more a sacred duty than ever. Your injunction shall remain with me till my dying hour!"

In the solitude and silence of his own apartment, Henry gave ample vent to his long-suppressed anguish, while mourning over the sad conviction, that he had now seen, probably for the last time, that generous and noble-hearted benefactor, whom he loved with an enthusiasm to which no words could do justice. Though every action of his life had been actuated by grateful attachment, he now felt as if his existence had been wasted without sufficiently testifying his ardent affection, and he wondered to think that any opportunities were ever formerly overlooked, of conversing with Sir Arthur, and attending on him. Henry thought of his growing infirmities, of his solitary home, of his high spirit, and of his resolute mind, now enervated by advancing years, and mourned to think that in sickness, or even at the hour of death, he himself must no longer be at hand, to console and support his benefactor.

Exhausted nature at length needed repose, and amidst the stillness and darkness of a night which had already seemed interminable, Henry felt himself slowly sinking into the calmness of slumber, when suddenly he was awakened to consciousness by a slight rustling sound from beside his bed, and the noise of some one breathing, as if trying in vain to suppress it. Uncertain what this might be, he opened his eyes, and lay perfectly immoveable; but gradually his heart almost ceased to beat, and quailed with a feeling of supernatural apprehension, when the curtains were slowly opened, and a dark form cautiously stooping over him, gazed into his face, till he felt the warm breath upon his cheek.

In the dead hour of night, Marion was startled out of a dull, heavy, unrefreshing sleep, by a sharp shrill cry for help, which seemed to proceed from Henry's room, and was succeeded by stifled cries, and the sound of a violent scuffle. Springing out of bed with instantaneous decision, and throwing on a cloak, Marion flew towards the spot, calling loudly for assistance, and the instant she

opened the door, some one, uttering a wild and fearful shriek, rushed violently out, striking her what seemed at the moment a severe blow on the arm, but an instant afterwards she became deluged with blood.

Henry was in the act of eagerly pursuing the rapidly receding figure, when, seeing Marion stagger backwards, he caught her in his arms, supported her to a chair, and hastily bound up her wound, which was bleeding profusely.

"Leave me! I am well! Look to my uncle," cried she, eagerly. "He must have been alarmed! How was it, Henry? Are you hurt? is Sir Arthur safe! Oh! there he is!" exclaimed she, rushing into her uncle's arms, and bursting into tears.

"Here is Mr Howard too!" added Henry, turning round, as that gentleman entered with a calm but rather anxious look, while the paleness of his cheek was almost startling. "You seem, Sir, to have dropped ready dressed from the clouds!"

"I seldom retire early to bed," replied he, with a quick, sharp, scrutinizing glance

at Henry. "Hearing a tumult in the house, I— I— "

"You gave it time to subside before attempting to interfere," added Henry, with a thrilling emphasis in his voice, while closely observing Mr Howard's countenance. "There is a strange and fearful mystery here!"

"There is!" replied he, gnawing his nails to the very quick, while he shot a momentary glance of rancorous detestation at young De Lancey, after which, his features became as passionless and immoveable as if they had been fixed in a vice. "The whole affair is mysterious—very— "

"What! you already know all?"

"I do!—I—I met the man rushing out of the house," answered Mr Howard, with the air of one outfacing an accusation, but his voice became low and suffocated. "I attempted to stop him, but—— "

"I am glad you did!" observed Sir Arthur, looking anxiously at Henry, and then gazing intently on the sallow countenance of Mr Howard, which became gradually dyed with the deepest hectic; his lips were now

closely compressed, he raised his tall figure to its full height, and closed his eyes, as if wishing thus to exclude some fearful spectre from his mind, but after a momentary struggle, he became once more calm and resolute, with a singular serenity of look and manner.

"You met some one now in the passage! The assassin must have escaped long before!" muttered Henry, in a vague and dreaming tone; but his brow grew darker, and there was an anxious intensity in his look and voice, when he added in a tone of resolute determination, "Let me be plain with you, Mr Howard! Your expression of countenance when I saw you last night, filled me with astonishment—almost with apprehension; it was a look never to be forgotten! Your manner now perplexes me! There is something amiss which I cannot understand, but for your sake as well as my own, this very strange affair must be fully investigated!"

"You suspect me!" exclaimed Mr Howard, with a sudden laugh of terrible mirth, and in a voice elevated into accents of indescribable fury, while his eye throwing off the torpor in

which it had been shrouded, glittered with the fearful brightness of delirium, his veins became swollen, and his figure dilated beyond its ordinary height, assuming an aspect of rage and of almost supernatural strength, such as insanity alone can give. "You suspect me, and you have dared to confess it! Many a word lightly spoken carries weight! The arrow has been shot at random, but you are right. Lightning rushes through my brain! I would be destructive as a whirlwind to you, De Lancey, as I once was to your wretched mother! She stood in the way of my advancement, as you may yet do,—she accused, betrayed, and ruined my sister," continued he in a rapid voice, insupportably shrill and piercing. "You too have injured me, and you shall suffer for it as she did—she died!"

With the spring and the strength of a tiger, he rushed towards Henry, and a knife which he had plucked from his sleeve, gleamed like lightning in the air, when suddenly Sir Arthur placed himself so as to intercept the madman's career, and fixed upon him his commanding eye, with a look of calm, stern,

and lofty composure, while Henry vainly strove to advance before him, and Marion, with frantic vehemence, called for help.

"Take my life, if you must have blood! I have trusted you, Howard,—shown you kindness when no other hand was stretched out in compassion, and through my heart only shall you reach that boy!" said Sir Arthur, firmly. "I am old, and ready to die, but he is a son to me, and shall not perish in my sight."

"Your life! no! not yours," replied the maniac, in accents of vehement horror, yet still fastening his glaring eyes on Henry, with looks of deadly malignity. "May my hand wither before it injures one hair of your venerable head! May my life be sacrificed first, and my limbs be manacled in chains!' But for him, his days shall yet be few! He bears a charmed life, or he must have died long ago! I would extinguish all mankind!—the whole human race, if I could; but there are two whom I have sworn to destroy, and he is one! I have said it! The will and the power are mine! I cannot fail! His life shall be hunted by night and by day! This

knife shall be plunged to the very hilt in his blood! I have said it! One blow—one mortal blow, and it is done!"

Having said these words, with gestures of outrageous madness, he bounded towards the door, broke through every impediment with a strength which ten men could scarcely have mastered, and giving a loud delirious cry of insufferable wildness, he instantaneously vanished.

Before long, the neighbourhood was aroused, lights gleamed and reddened in the opposite windows, shouts arose among the assembling crowd, and a rapid search was made for the frantic and mysterious criminal, but not a trace of any living being could be discovered, and when they paused to listen, not a sound broke the sullen stillness of the night.

"This is my second preservation from a violent death!" said Henry, in once more taking leave of Sir Arthur. "And most forcibly do all these circumstances bring to mind the horrors of that fearful night which first threw me on the care of my benefactor! It is exactly such a shadowy form bending over

me in the silence of midnight, which has often from that hour haunted me in my dreams! I am ready, I trust, to brave any danger in the open face of day; but there is something terrible to me, I confess—something vague and appalling in the stealthy, mysterious, death-like approach of an enemy evidently insane, who has pursued me with remorseless hatred from childhood to the present hour, breaking upon me in the darkest hours of midnight, and invading me amidst the moments of helpless repose; but I am under the care of one who slumbereth not nor sleepeth, and to Him I confidently commit myself."

CHAPTER XIII.

So thistles wear the softest down,
To hide their prickles till they're grown;
And then declare themselves, and tear
Whatever ventures to come near.

Every man should be considered accountable to Providence, not only for diffusing as much enjoyment around him as he possibly can, but also for being as happy himself as is consistent with the many gifts bestowed on him individually; and it is a duty to look back with self-reproach on any hour of existence, which, on account of our ill temper or discontent, has been less enjoyed by ourselves or by another, than it might have been; yet it is an obvious truth, that all men might be happier than they are, if mankind would but

make the best of life for themselves and others. Never had this remark appeared so undeniable to Marion as now, in the case of Agnes, who alienated Sir Patrick more and more by her peevishness, though the arrows of her satire had more poison than point in them, and he was always ready enough to enter on a skirmish in the diamond-cut-diamond style of conversation, while it often blistered the very heart of their gentle sister, to hear the bitter taunting remarks and repartees which they levelled at each other.

One day, Agnes, in a magnificent fit of ill-humour, had seated herself at that universal refuge for idleness and discontent, an open window, complaining that the dulness of Edinburgh was quite maddening, while it became evident that the needle of her temper pointed in the most stormy direction. It was a favourite doctrine with Agnes, that *ennui* is peculiar to intellectual beings, and that those who never suffered from it were like cows or sheep, scarcely to be considered rational. On the present occasion, therefore, she was relieving the intolerable tedium which oppressed

her, by delivering her opinion to Sir Patrick in no measured terms, on the unutterable cruelty of his leaving her stranded in Edinburgh, while she understood he was going soon to amuse himself abroad.

She seemed inflated with ill-humour, like a spider bursting with its own poison, and her countenance had assumed not the most amiable expression in the world, while Sir Patrick snatched up a newspaper, which he began intently reading upside down. Having successfully and distinctly proved that she was a martyr to the injuries which "patient merit of th' unworthy takes," and her brother being apparently on the point of falling asleep before her face, Agnes suddenly rose from her seat, with an exclamation of annoyance and astonishment, saying,

"I do believe here is that old formality, Sir Arthur, coming to call! Getting slowly and with difficulty out of a ragged, ruinous-looking hackney coach, as frail as himself! I had no idea he was become so aged and infirm! What a bore! I do wish we might enjoy the privilege, after being grown up, of

choosing our own relations! *J'ai pitié de moi-même!*"

"What can bring the old fellow here?" exclaimed Sir Patrick, crumpling up his newspaper, and approaching the window with an angry whistle. "He looks, in those glittering spectacles, like a post-chaise with the lamps lighted! I must be grown quite respectable, when the Admiral honours me with a visit! Has anybody paid my debts?"

"I declare!" added Agnes, "Sir Arthur gropes his way along as if he came from the Blind Asylum, and his dear puckered old face looks as dry and cracked as an old picture!"

"Suppose I stay in the room *incog.*, to hear all the civil and agreeable truths our worthy uncle will say of me!" said Sir Patrick, laughingly throwing himself into a large arm-chair, in a distant corner of the room. "I should certainly realize the old proverb about listeners hearing no good of themselves! Sir Arthur is so blind he will never see me, and it would be no bad joke for a rainy day!"

"I think it would be a very bad joke indeed, Patrick!" said Marion, colouring.

"But I am sure you would not play upon our uncle's infirmities, and I shall certainly ask you some question the moment he enters, to betray your ambuscade!"

"Marion! for a young lady who professes timidity, you exhibit a tolerable share of decision!" replied Sir Patrick, looking with surprise at the glowing countenance of his sister, whose voice quivered with agitation. "However, since you are determined to make a scene between Sir Arthur and me, I shall be off, not feeling in the humour for one of his lectures to-day! He will be in a whirlpool of rage at this raffle I am making of the family plate and pictures. Perhaps he means to take a ticket! Do not mention, for your lives, girls, that I am in the next room, unless he be come on a matter of life and death! Exit Sir Patrick in haste!"

When Sir Arthur slowly entered the room, there was a look of unwonted care in his fine countenance, and less firmness in his step than usual. He silently but cordially shook hands with Agnes, while a look of almost compassionate kindness beamed in his coun-

tenance, and Marion, with girlish delight sparkling in her eyes, and dimpling in her cheeks, led him to a chair, on which he sat down for some moments without speaking, apparently fatigued and agitated, while she filled up the pause which ensued, by taking his hat and stick, placing cushions on his chair, slipping her arm within his when she seated herself by his side, and showing a thousand demonstrations of her heartfelt affection and respect.

"Uncle Arthur!" said Agnes, observing him at length glancing round the room. "You have never been in this house before!"

"No! nor I never expected to enter it!" replied he, in a tone of profound sadness. "Never!—urgent duty brings me now! This then is the family residence to which the Dunbars of Dornington are at last degraded! Is your brother at home?"

"No!" replied Agnes, with the most perfect intrepidity of countenance. "You must have met him in the Park."

"I did not perceive him, and it was as well," answered Sir Arthur, with melancholy

sternness. " The seldomer we meet the better ! It is a disgrace to be in the room with Sir Patrick."

" Uncle Arthur ! you are growing angry and personal," interrupted Marion, in a beseeching tone, while she took his hand caressingly in her own. " That is the harshest thing you ever said of our brother !"

" May he never deserve more, or he shall have it," continued the Admiral, with angry vehemence, while his neckcloth seemed growing too tight for him. " Sir Patrick is, without meaning to flatter him, about the greatest scamp I know. His last step in the regiment was purchased, I am told, over the head of a young officer from whom he gained the money at play ! but Marion, my dear girl, I am not come to quarrel with you, the dearest niece in the world,—nor with Agnes, though I could wish that she came sometimes to see me !"

Sir Arthur held out his hand to both his nieces, and added, in a tone of hurried agitation, " If you had witnessed, Agnes, the many long years during which your father

and I associated together on terms of more than brotherly confidence, you could not wonder that now, living in an empty world, the grave of all who started in life beside me, amidst old remembrances, vanished pleasures, faded health, and lost affections, I cling to whatever reminds me of him, and that nothing can make me cease to love you all,—all without exception,—even that disgraceful scoundrel your brother. I would close these eyes in death, only once to see him the man his father's son should be, but I might live for ever if I wait till then !"

Marion was grieved and alarmed to perceive her uncle's increasing agitation, while he hastily turned away to hide it, but the breeze which had ruffled his mind soon passed away, and though his hand still shook with emotion, he added in a calmer tone of deep-rooted anxiety,

" I have been told this morning, that Sir Patrick intends to cut his stick, and take flight immediately to the continent, therefore I am here to ascertain, my dear girls, what is to become of you ?"

" I scarcely know indeed !" replied Marion, in a tone of irresistible depression. " Patrick seems to have no settled plan ! He did talk of hiring a lodging for us, and engaging some old lady for a chaperon."

" And for such a scheme, my dear Marion, where in all the wide world is he to get money,—or even credit ? Not in the name of Sir Patrick Dunbar !—a name, that in my brother's time, stood proudly forward as a warrant for everything honourable, soldier-like, and generous !—a name, till now, never sullied by dishonour."

Sir Arthur's voice faltered, a hectic colour burned on his cheek, he remained silent for several minutes, and then continued, after a strong effort to recover himself,

" It is no matter ! Patrick adds a nail to my coffin every day, but I am the last wreck of an old generation, and have already outstaid the period intended for man ! My head is whitened by the frost of more than eighty winters,—my heart seared with the wear and tear of life,—my very existence a perpetual miracle ! It would people a city if all could be revived

whom I have intimately known in those days when the dearest ties of life were clustered around me, but now I am a scathed and solitary ruin. How truly has it been said, that the remembrance of youth is a sigh, yet all has been ordered as it should be, and that wind is ever the best which will carry us most safely to the end of our voyage."

Sir Arthur paused with a look of solemn and inexpressible emotion, and Marion pressed her uncle's hand affectionately, hot tears coursed each other down her face, and she gazed earnestly at his countenance, while, looking at her with his usual expression of benignity and kindness, he continued, " You are the chief, or rather the only objects of my care, for all my wishes and hopes on my own account might now be contained in a nut-shell. I am a stranger in this altered world, soon—very soon to depart. There is one heart in my brother's family, Marion, that feels as his child ought to feel, and one eye that will be dimmed with sorrow when I am no more. For your sake, and yours only, need I wish to live! Well may the young weep for sorrow,—

they have long to endure it, but for me, the end of all earthly things is at hand. Many a warning bell has reached my ear already, and I would wish only to see you launched under safe protection in the stormy ocean of life. With no guardian but a brother worse than nobody, and an old infirm uncle tottering into the grave, my dear girls, what are you to do?"

Marion glanced at Agnes, who tried to preserve her usual air of consequential indifference, and pulled her *bouquet* to pieces, with an expression of silent and majestic impatience, but she neither looked up nor answered.

"While I live, you can always confer a pleasure by taking shelter with me," continued Sir Arthur, in the warmest tone of kindness; "and all that an old man can do to make you happy shall be done, though that, I fear, is little or nothing."

Agnes, evidently not much delighted at this unexpected proposal of being located at what she always called "the admiral's humdrummery," now assumed a pre-engaged look, while practising a particularly graceful attitude in the opposite mirror, and drawing out her long

glossy ringlets with a cold artificial smile, she answered, "Thank you, Sir Arthur! I am sure we are most excessively obliged. Probably now that Marion is so well disposed of, my brother may take me with him to Paris!"

"Reckoning without your host, Agnes!" whispered Sir Patrick, entering with a look of assumed bravado, but of evident embarrassment. "Wishes cost nothing; but how could such an idea ever enter your ingenious head! Pray strike a light and look for your senses! Ah! Sir Arthur! A hundred thousand welcomes! I am happy not to have missed your kind visit!"

"That would have been a mutual misfortune!" replied the Admiral, dryly, and drawing himself up to his full height, while Sir Patrick bowed and smiled with an air of sarcastic gratitude. "Certainly, for some years past I am not owing you many visits!"

"Why, no! I hate to see people running themselves into debt; therefore believing you might find it inconvenient to return my cards, I have not been very troublesome in the way

of calling; but," continued Sir Patrick, stealing a look of laughing condolence at Agnes, "my sisters are exceedingly delighted by your very considerate offer of a home during my absence. The plan will suit admirably! They both want sea-bathing, and — and society, Agnes?"

"In respect to society I can promise nothing. I would raise a regiment of beaux if possible, but my house is a mere Greenwich Hospital for years past, visited only by a few veterans as aged and broken as myself."

"I wish they had all gone down in the Royal George," muttered Agnes, whose face now looked like a thunder cloud. "A set of resuscitated mummies, with scarcely a complete set of limbs and features amongst them! I would rather live in the moon, where there is at least one entire man to be seen."

"We instituted a club lately," continued Sir Arthur, "in which no member was eligible who had not been deprived of one limb at least in the service of his country! With many of my friends all is lost but honour! That is what a man should die rather than

lose! It was long a hereditary heir-loom in our family, Patrick! entailed upon you, Sir! handed down untarnished from father to son, generation after generation! And where is it now? Lost in the kennel, the race-course, the stable, the gambling house, and every receptacle of infamy and shame, while I live to see the Dunbars of Dornington utterly ruined, as well as utterly disgraced!"

"Not as long as you live!" exclaimed Sir Patrick, advancing with sudden emotion, and grasping his uncle's hand. "Your name, Sir Arthur, will shed a lustre over our house after mine has been blotted out for ever from the memory of man!"

"Why should it be so?" asked Sir Arthur, speaking in a tone of deep vehemence and solemnity, while his noble and serious countenance assumed an expression of that affection which nothing could extinguish. "Patrick! it is a long lane that has no turning! Be like your father in mind, as you are in person, and let me leave you my best blessing at last!"

"Too late! too late!" replied Sir Patrick, walking hurriedly up and down the room,

and then suddenly resuming his usual tone of reckless gayety. "No! no! as Joseph Surface remarked, 'too good a character is inconvenient!' You are unadulterated gold, Sir Arthur, but I must only set up for being a genuine Bristol farthing."

"Yet, Patrick! even if honour were like truth, at the bottom of a well, it is worth diving for; and the best throw on the dice is to throw them away."

"Your whole nature and mine are different, Sir Arthur! A wasp may work his heart out, but he never can make honey," replied the young Baronet, hurriedly. "I have neither wishes, plans, nor hopes for myself! Already I am older in heart than you, and neither know nor care how short a time I have to exist! *N'importe!* It would not certainly be convenient for me at present to fly off like a kite, with both my sisters at my tail, therefore we are all most grateful for your kind invitation to them, and shall accept the honour you offer with pleasure."

"Be it so then," replied Sir Arthur, in a calm, dignified, but mournful voice. "If my

nieces will be content with little, they may be as happy as if we had much. I am most anxious to invent anything which might add to their enjoyment, and Lady Towercliffe tells me, Agnes, that your whole heart is bent on spending a month at Harrowgate! If that would really be any pleasure or advantage to you, tell me so, and I shall endeavour if possible to go there myself, though now, in my old age, very like Punch, who could act only in his own box."

"Oh! not for worlds would we ask you to go, dear uncle," exclaimed Marion, venturing in her eagerness to speak before Agnes, and shocked at the idea of a journey, the fatigue and expense of which she knew the Admiral was so little able to incur. "We shall be more than happy at home! do not think of such a thing!"

"But if I may be permitted to have an opinion, being the person consulted, Marion, let me say that nothing on earth was ever more enchanting than this delicious proposal. You have made me the happiest person alive, Sir Arthur!" exclaimed Agnes, for once con-

descending to look perfectly pleased. "I must endeavour not to go mad with joy! You are our very best friend! My dear uncle, all I can say is, YOU ARE A GENTLEMAN!"

"Well, Agnes! That being the case," replied Sir Arthur, smiling, "how soon can you be ready to start?"

"To night!—this minute!—wait till I put on my bonnet!" exclaimed Agnes, in accents of the liveliest glee. "I am quite impatient to set about forgetting Edinburgh!"

"Well done, Lady Towercliffe! Harrowgate was a capital hit!" cried Sir Patrick, laughing satirically. "Before taking a voyage to India, there is no place like it for young ladies! Why, Agnes, it is a perfect emporium of *beaux!* You will live there at the rate of twenty new victims a-day! A down-pour of marriages takes place at the end of every season. Several jewellers have made large fortunes at Harrowgate, merely by providing wedding rings! and a confectioner is kept at each hotel, with nothing else to do but to make marriage cakes! Sir Arthur must

take a dozen of lessons in match-making, from some of the manœuvring mammas and aunts."

"An unmanœuvring uncle is all we shall require," answered Agnes, looking daggers at Sir Patrick, in all the dignity of having been extremely ill-treated. "In my humble opinion ——"

"Humble, Agnes!" interrupted Sir Patrick. "Did I hear aright? Where did you ever learn the meaning of that word?"

"As for manœuvring or match-making, I leave all that sort of thing to such people as Lady Towercliffe," observed Sir Arthur. "She and other old ladies have such an intense curiosity about weddings, that I do think, even when laid in their graves, they would like to be told who are going to be married. In such affairs I should be out of my element, like a bear in a boat, not knowing how to proceed, —— but at my age ——"

"Your age, uncle Arthur! You are no age at all!" interrupted Agnes, in high good humour. "You are not a day older since we were first acquainted! As Harrowgate is the

greatest marriage manufactory in Britain, I should not wonder if you were to pick up a wife there yourself! Indeed, no single man ever escapes, and I shall make it my business to get you off!"

"By all means!" replied the Admiral, entering good-humouredly into the jest. "I have no doubt some young lady will fall desperately and hopelessly in love with me! Are those new spectacles becomingly put on? My eyes are so fine, they must be kept under glass! My hair has had rather too much of the bleaching liquid lately, but do you recommend a wig, Agnes, or the vegetable dye?"

"I would not alter a hair of your head, uncle Arthur," said Marion, smiling. "And I am sure you will have more admirers at Harrowgate than any of us. I should like to know," added she, after the Admiral had departed, "out of the prodigious incomes enjoyed by thousands of persons in Britain, how much is spent during the year in really generous actions,—in actions of such disinterested liberality as our dear kind uncle's, when putting himself to all this expense and inconveni-

ence for our sakes—for ours, who never can make him the smallest return."

"To say the truth," replied Agnes, laughing, "I merely go to Harrowgate for Sir Arthur's good! It will renew his youth to be forced into balls, beguiled into pic-nics, and enlisted into dinner parties. A diet of ice and lemonade is excellent for old people."

"You are lucky girls!" exclaimed Sir Patrick. "A month at Harrowgate! why! you might be married five times over in that time! It is not the most impossible thing in the world that I may come there myself, to meet De Crespigny! The matrimonial horizon looked rather dark and unpromising in this quarter, Agnes; but your extraordinary merit is quite unknown as yet in the English hemisphere. The world shall see you, and you shall see the world now, under Sir Arthur's auspices. Good worthy old soul! his very walking-stick is respectable!"

"Then I wish you were like it," said Agnes, in her most stinging accent. "Sir Arthur's respectability might be divided among a dozen of people whom I know, and each

would get a share larger than he ever had before."

"You will perfectly canonize him, now that he can be made useful! Agnes! you jumped at Sir Arthur's offer as an ex-minister would jump at a seat in the cabinet! You showered down thanks on the Admiral's devoted head, like *bon-bons* at the carnival!"

"No wonder!" said Marion. "Think of dear uncle Arthur leaving his old friends, his old habits, and his old home for us, when he has said and thought so often, that his next journey would be that long and last one, which we must all travel, never to return."

"It is vastly kind, as you say, Marion!" added Agnes, flippantly. "Leaving that old fireside, where he has so long been spinning interminable yarns, spoiling old servants, reading old magazines, dosing over antiquated newspapers, letting himself be cheated by beggars, and getting convivial over very weak negus!"

"Agnes, how long is it since you lost your senses!" asked Marion, indignantly. "Nothing short of that could account for your

holding up our venerable uncle to ridicule, even with no one to hear you but ourselves, who know his inestimable worth and kindness."

"Well, girls, the best reward you can give him, is to look delightfully with all your might, and to waltz and quadrille yourselves into husbands immediately!" said Sir Patrick, in a tone of lively exultation. "Now, tighten the drums of your ears and listen, for I am about to give you a popular course of lectures on the important subject of match-making. Marion, you are a flower that has bloomed in the shade, and must now be displayed in the sunshine; therefore you ought to know that fortune is like a game at blind man's buff, where the timid and retiring are forgotten, while the bold and forward alone put themselves in the way of receiving her favours. Agnes has frittered away her time only too long already on the mere minnows of society, danglers and detrimentals of the younger species; but I must tell you plainly," ——

"Never tell me anything plainly," interrupted Agnes, laughing. "But you are alto-

gether mistaken, for I have often wished that people would get rid of their younger sons now, as Tom Thumb's father wisely did, losing them in a forest and leaving them to starve."

"Then take my advice, and never dance with any. I warn you against fashionable huzzars, all spurs and gold lace, with more bullion on their jackets than in their purses; *attachés* who are not to be attached, ready to fall into flirtations but not into love; Honourable Edwards and Honourable Fredericks, who never are but always to be rich, investing their whole fortunes in white kid gloves, and offering, perhaps, to share their starvation with you; and," added Sir Patrick, with a glance at Marion, who blushed deeply, but said nothing, "remember, above all, I forbid reverend divines, young or old, especially those who have no living and no prospect of a mitre. You should each knock down a coronet for yourselves, and avoid the most detestable of all poverty,—genteel poverty; at the same time, do not gamble too deeply in life. Ascertain well, '*sur quel pied à dan-*

ser.' In a sickly season, even a fifth son is not to be despised. Take a smaller certainty rather than a greater possibility, and lose no time, or the bridge may break down before you run across it."

"Your advice to me is perfectly superfluous," replied Agnes, looking very superb, and giving a contemptuous toss of her head. "I detest economy, and abjure all penny weddings, having no genius for turning or dyeing silk dresses,—putting servants on scanty allowance,—driving about in hackney coaches,—locking up jellies,—counting out eggs,—or measuring small beer! I am sworn at Highgate always to prefer the best partners, and generally have them."

"How would you like," said Marion, "to have been the young lady long ago in London, who could not dance with the King of Prussia, because she was previously engaged to the Emperor of Russia?"

"That would suit me exactly! I should like to carry my head as high as the Pope's tiara. But I have reason, as you know, to expect hereafter one of the proudest coronets

in Britain; and shall certainly not remain a day longer than I can help dependent, Patrick, on the most singularly generous, liberal, and considerate of brothers,—with the one only fault of caring for nobody but himself. If I were drowning, you would scarcely stretch out your little finger to save me, in case it might become wet."

"Quite right, Agnes, not to depend on me, or you would have little to depend upon. My pockets are to let unfurnished now! I shall perhaps go to Australia,—or probably measure the depth of the Serpentine some evening; though, in the mean while, I may put up with life a little longer, bad as it is. Now, therefore, Agnes, hear my last advice. You have the world upon a string, and shall see a large assortment of admirers to choose among. When torrents of proposals are pouring in upon you, as they will and must do soon, get safely into the haven of matrimony, or you will be shipwrecked for ever. Accomplished misses are quite a drug in the market now; but you ought to be ashamed, Agnes, of missing that little pigmy peer, Lord Bowater,

two years ago, when you had three days the start of every other young lady in making the acquaintance. He treated you shockingly, to fall in love at first sight with that paltry Miss Gordon. As for any other coronet you are ever likely to wear, I know of none that even a telescope could give you the most distant prospect of. Now wait till I am out of the room before you faint!"

"Marion!" said Agnes, yawning outrageously when her brother had departed, and looking unspeakably forlorn. "How often I have laughed ready to die, at the case of other girls, without ever dreaming it could in any degree resemble my own! Every year that worthy old respectable Lord Towercliffe, as fond of home as uncle Arthur or any garden-snail, suddenly breaks up his comfortable establishment in the country, and comes to town with the declared intention of giving Charlotte and Maria 'proper advantages!' The poor girls, then, see their father obliged to undergo the wretchedness of frequenting a club, to form suitable acquaintances, and suffering hourly martyrdom in being absent

from his farm, his stud, his improvements, and all that interests him in life, while our active, energetic friend, Lady Towercliffe, plunged into a wilderness of blond and feathers, rushes eagerly from house to house followed by her flock of disposable daughters, whom she is perpetually puffing off, like Robins the auctioneer. Then follow dinner parties, given at an expense which the young ladies know to be ruinous, balls, soirées, flirtations, disappointments, and at last the family coach trundling slowly back at a funeral pace to St Abbsbury, where the lodge-keeper despondingly counts heads as they pass, to see whether their numbers continue still undiminished! It is altogether horrid! and perfectly laughable, too!"

"Not very laughable!" said Marion, colouring; "whether Lord Towercliffe take the affair good-humouredly or otherwise, it must be most degrading and humiliating for the young ladies! I can fancy nothing more odious!"

"A grand skirmish ending in defeat!" added Agnes ironically. "I remember formerly, when these Malcolm girls were in their schoolroom, the chief bugbear hung over them, if

they neglected the arts of dress and fascination, was, that they would inevitably die old maids. They were educated for the profession of matrimony, and were each taught to expect a husband of rank and fortune, at the very least equal to their father's."

"Yes!" said Marion, "Lady Towercliffe would consider any one of her very plain daughters as perfectly disgraced, either to marry in a grade the least degree below her own, or not to marry at all, therefore they are allowed no alternative. The position of young ladies during the present time seems far from enviable! In these days of clubs, money-making, and old bachelorism, not a third of those girls who grow up now will be married at all, and perhaps not a third of those who do marry will be happy! It seems to me strange and unaccountable that parents who have any consideration for the happiness of their daughters, inculcate no ideas into their minds and hearts unconnected with matrimony, and, like Lady Towercliffe, drive them forward to the public view, a mark for censure, gossip, and ridicule, till they find shelter in some other

home, where it is five to one that they will be miserable."

"Yes, miserable indeed!" added Agnes, indolently, "men are all so selfish! Husbands expect the whole time, thoughts, and affections of their wives in return for the very little they choose to spare from their horses, dogs, and clubs. On these their whole income is to be squandered, while they keep to that favourite rule—'What is yours is mine, and what is mine is my own.' The ladies must be invariably in good humour and lively spirits at home, perfectly well dressed, with a cheerful fire-side and a luxurious table; but, at the same time, we are never to ask for money or to have any bills! our servants are all to be first-rate on the very lowest wages, and our children in the best order without ever being punished or thwarted!—a fairy's wand could not do the half of it."

"I am often amused now," said Marion, "to hear people say of the dullest and most unprepossessing old bachelor in the world, 'I wonder he never takes it into his head to marry!' while they observe, in discussing any

girl more beautiful and fascinating than another, ' How very surprising that she has never got married!' when, at the same time, there is not perhaps a single year of her life since she was born that she might not have been established if she chose. I believe that the vulgar consideration of money makes all the difference; for if ladies had the fortunes, instead of gentlemen, they would be quite as uncertain and capricious, off and on, about marrying or not marrying, as—as even Captain De Crespigny!"

"One of the last times he called here," said Agnes, "when lamenting, as he often does, his unmarriageable state of poverty at present, Captain De Crespigny said, in his droll way, that he would some day bring a bill into Parliament, ordaining that every old bachelor who could maintain a wife for himself and will not, shall be obliged to support one for somebody else, who wishes to marry and cannot afford. Now, Marion, let us put all our Harrowgate irons in the fire, and prepare to be admired by all admirers next week at the Granby!"

"You know, Agnes, though I do not tease

you or Patrick by often alluding to what you call my sentimental vagaries, that there is only one person in the world by whom I have any ambition to be admired; though our engagement must be postponed, till Richard is in circumstances to marry with prudence. Without reference to that, however, in respect to Harrowgate society, it is said to be more like a low farce than a genteel comedy!"

"A little of both! but we shall be in the best set. I hope Sir Arthur will not be teasing us with any of his world-before-the-flood ideas, about late hours, waltzing, and all the other enormities of fashionable life! It is my duty, really, to give him a few presentable ideas now, for he lived in the dark ages, when old Queen Charlotte used to keep the ladies all so preternaturally precise and decorous. Most of the Admiral's notions he had from his mother, who lived, I believe, with Queen Elizabeth!"

"But, Agnes! even the prejudices of our uncle should be attended to! He shews us greater kindness than we ever have known,

or can know from any body else, and the whole wealth of his affection is devoted to us."

"Well, then! I wish his love could be turned into money! I often think if our skins were made of gold, that Patrick would flay us alive! Of course I shall not fly in Sir Arthur's face upon every trifle, for we must humour him sometimes! One day, long ago, I took him in delightfully, by saying that if he disapproved of waltzing, I hoped he would not object to a galope! At Harrowgate, the military men will all fortunately be out of uniform, therefore Sir Arthur need never guess who or what they are, as he has a most inconvenient dislike to my being so intimate with the army list, and one really cannot do without a few tame officers running about the drawing-room."

"But, Agnes! as Patrick says, you cannot live upon fried epaulettes, therefore it would look much better not to be always surrounded by so great a variety of officers! It scarcely seems respectable to be, as Patrick called you long ago, the member for Barrackshire!"

"Marion! you are most ridiculously circum-

spect for your years!" replied Agnes, in her most stately tone; "you have certainly commenced life at the wrong end, and will be beginning to grow young, when I am thinking it time to grow old—if I ever do!"

"I wish not to buy experience at so dear a rate as most girls do, but rather to benefit by that of others,—to reach the kernel at once, without having any trouble in breaking the shell!"

"Pshaw, Marion! I would feel myself a fool for a week, had I spoken such nonsense! It gives me the tic douloureux to hear you! Who would think of listening now to every old hack, worn out with the vicissitudes of life, and only fit to make you melancholy before the time! But take your own way," added Agnes, who allowed Marion her own way, as the Vicar of Wakefield's daughters were allowed their pocket-money, which was never to be used. "You go upon the impossible plan of pleasing everybody; but remember the wise old proverb,—'Cover yourself with honey, and the flies will eat you up.'"

When Marion spoke from the heart to her

sister, she was accustomed to find herself talking to the winds, therefore she now concluded the conversation with a lively good-humoured reply, and sat down to the pianoforte. Her music was as different as her conversation from that of Agnes, who but little appreciated it, and generally left the room, humming a tune, as soon as Marion struck her first chord; but, on this occasion, she for once remained stationary.

The style of Agnes' singing was a brilliant bravura, which, in any public performer, might have commanded whirlwinds of applause, but while her clear soprano voice dazzled and astonished by its uncommon brilliancy, Sir Patrick alleged that it cracked every glass in the room, and that her taste had been cultivated till she had literally none of her own,—Bellini's cadences, Rubini's shake, and Anybody's graces, all acquired from every teacher except nature, to whom nothing had been trusted.

The rich full-toned melody of Marion's *contralto* voice, often became instinct with the simple suggestions of her own feeling, while

her music had that one only charm which never can be taught,—expression. There was a depth of sensibility in her eye and voice, which rivetted the attention and awakened the sympathy of every heart, while it always appeared that, if display had been her object, she could have done much more than she attempted. No bird on a tree ever warbled its wild notes with more perfect simplicity and real delight. The rippling of a brook over its pebbly bed, or the sighing of the breeze amidst the summer foliage, was not more entirely natural, and while Sir Patrick sometimes protested that "every note was a tear," she yet reached even his feelings, so that not a whisper could be heard from him till the last cadence had melted away on his ear. Marion having seldom yet had any audience except her school-companions, remained almost unconscious of her own singular gift; but this day she sang with deep enthusiasm, and the last thrilling tones of her voice had died inaudibly away, when she looked round and saw young Lord Wigton standing near the door beside Agnes, in an attitude of in-

tense and speechless admiration, with all his faculties, if he had any, apparently suspended, —his lips apart,—his eyes beaming with delight,—and his whole expression full of wonder and extacy; while Sir Patrick was lounging on a sofa near, exhibiting a smiling frolicsome expression in his eye, full of fun and mischief.

"This is hardly fair," exclaimed Marion, laughingly starting up with a brilliant blush of astonishment; "you know, Lord Wigton, stealing into a dwelling-house is punishable by law."

"Whatever be the penalty, I am sufficiently rewarded," answered he with a shy diffident look. "My flute will be happy any day to make you an apology."

Those who love music, and those only, can estimate its power over the feelings, and for several minutes afterwards Lord Wigton remained silent, then, suddenly awakening as if from a dream, he uttered some incoherent exclamations of rapture, and in tones of unaffected animation entreated Marion to sing the same air once again; while she, amused

and surprised at his extraordinary *empressement*, prepared to comply.

"My song is not worth asking for twice, and still less worth refusing, therefore you shall have it in my very best style!" said Marion, playing the prelude, for she had none of that giggling affected shyness assumed by most girls during their first winter. "This note is pitched so high, you should go up stairs to hear it!"

"How strange that one so gay as you, should have a voice of such melting sadness!" exclaimed Lord Wigton. "It awakens fifty thousand thoughts and feelings I never knew before! I shall become an improvisatore, when listening to melody 'so rare and enchanting!'"

"You must have heard it through the keyhole!" said Marion, laughing. "I had no idea that my trash could reach any ears but my own."

"It did more, for it reached my heart! Your voice is the very essence of nightingales. I shall follow you to Harrowgate, for the chance of hearing that air once again."

" Perhaps, then, it has some peculiar interest," said Marion, surprised at the warmth of his enthusiasm. " The chief delight of music certainly is, the associations it brings out, the remembrances of bye-gone hours it recalls, and the million of little phantoms it creates of past or future times."

" Marion ! your voice is by no means equal to that song, and your style is very amateur-ish indeed," interrupted Agnes, bitterly. " I do not wish to boast," added she, laughing, to conceal her irritation ; " but Grisi never ventured to sing that air after hearing me, and Delvini said his fortune would be made, if he could engage me for his Prima Donna. I only mention this among friends ! Keep it secret, for I hate to cause jealousy or mortification ! Few people understand music like my old master Delvini, who said that my god-mother must certainly have possessed the wand of a fairy, and gifted me with music."

" Ah! Delvini is the man who plays a whole concerto upon one note of the piano, or something wonderful of that kind," observed Lord Wigton, looking impatiently for Marion to

begin. "I hate the helter-skelter school in music! people scampering through their songs with a thousand miraculous flourishes, which set one's teeth on edge."

"Such performers," answered Marion, "give me no more pleasure than to see Van Amburgh thrust his head into the lion's mouth, which is very surprising, and what I could not do myself, but it excites no sympathy, and raises no emotion better than wonder."

"Your voice is like some fairy spirit that would lead me to the world's end," said Lord Wigton, with an air of eager expectation. "And now, Miss Dunbar, I am all ears!"

"So I think! and very long ears too," muttered Agnes to herself, angry beyond all bounds at the young Peer's attention to Marion, when hitherto she had been the principal, or rather the only object of interest to him whenever they were in the same room. Agnes, without an assiduous lover, ready to put on her shawl, clasp her bracelets, and carry her boa, was like a ship without a compass, not knowing which way to turn, and

though nothing could make up for the want of those graceful flatteries, amusing quarrels, and ambitious hopes, to which she was accustomed with Captain De Crespigny, yet should he disappoint her, Lord Wigton had been recently promoted to the character of a *pis aller* in the list of her admirers, as she was heard to remark, that "it is better to have a donkey that carries you, than a horse that throws you." Though usually the object of her unbounded ridicule, yet the young Peer had recently become of so much importance to her, that it was indeed an unpardonable affront when he spared one moment's attention to Marion, while at the same time she considered his taste on the occasion, quite as questionable as that of the bird which preferred a barley-corn to a diamond.

Next morning, to the increased indignation of Agnes, Lord Wigton's servant left at the door of St John's Lodge, two splendid bouquets, both equally rare and beautiful; but when they were presented, Agnes looked angrily at Marion's, and plucked her own to pieces, saying, "That absurd little man! it

is worth while to hear him talk of being in love, he makes the subject so thoroughly ridiculous! I like all my lovers till I tire of them, and his Lordship's reign was over last Tuesday. He has the stiffness of the poker without its occasional heat, and no more individuality of character than a leaf upon a tree! I wonder where we could have him measured for a cap-and-bells! He has so little vivacity, that he now wears the fool's cap without the bells. He did so weary me! I think Lord Wigton must be the man Rochefoucalt had in his eye when he said that many people would never have known how to fall in love, if they had not first heard it talked about! His sentimental speeches are so thoroughly ridiculous, they often remind me of Liston's meditation in the farce, 'There stands my Mary's cottage! and she must either be in it, or out of it!'"

CHAPTER XIV.

What gay ideas crowd the vacant brain,
When Peers and Dukes, and all their sweeping train,
Garters and stars, and coronets appear,
And in soft sounds, "Your Grace," salutes the ear.

If happiness will not come of itself, most very sagacious people set forth in search of that enjoyment which none are willing to do without, though many plans are generally tried, before the right one be discovered. Agnes now declared that she was "ridiculously happy," while plunged in a whirl of preparations for Harrowgate, trying on every bonnet at every milliner's, and discussing the tone and colouring of silks or satins, with as much care and science as an amateur in

paintings would devote to the study of a Titian or a Vandyke, while her spirits were restored to their highest pitch, by a letter she had accidentally seen from Captain De Crespigny, expressing the greatest delight in the prospect of seeing Sir Patrick and "his charming sister" once more, and mentioning that he was about soon to arrive at the Granby, in attendance on his uncle, who had already preceded him there. Agnes at once restored herself now to the pleasing certainty of Captain De Crespigny's sincerity, and every ribbon she chose, or every costume she ordered, had an immediate reference to his taste. "*La toilette est une belle invention;*" but Marion's dress, without causing half the trouble and *fracas* occasioned by that of Agnes, seemed invariably to fit better than any other person's, and the colours she wore were always in the most perfect harmony.

Agnes never became wearied of the pleasurable bustle in which she was now engaged, till at length, when the imperial was packed, and the last box with extreme difficulty closed, she declared herself to be quite

in love with life, and sprang into Sir Arthur's carriage, radiant in all the joy of a thousand anticipated triumphs. It might have been a study for any artist wishing to sketch a frontispiece for "The Pleasures of Hope," to see Agnes indulging all her own impossible expectations and ineffable wishes; but unlike the Goddess of Hope, she required no anchor whatever to rest on. Her drafts on the bank of futurity were unlimited by a single consideration of reason or probability, and, like the Chinese plant that lives without requiring any nourishment from the earth, she existed upon a diet of airy nothings, and in a pleasing delirium of unreal fancies, wherein Captain De Crespigny generally acted the principal part. In the mind of Agnes—or rather in the empty space where a mind is supposed to be—she hung up a splendid picture-gallery, grouped and painted according to her own taste, displaying shadows as vivid as realities; and ignorant apparently that ever "hope told a flattering tale," she seemed scarcely to have a past or present period in her ex-

istence, the whole being formed into one bright futurity, glittering with splendid impossibilities.

If those who waste and enervate their intellects by building castles in the air, could be supposed able to create scenes in reality, as easily and rapidly as they do in imagination, it would, perhaps, be the most vivid conception man could form of omnipotent power. Agnes' *chateaux en Espagne* were in a most florid style of architecture, but scarcely lasted long enough to become finished edifices, as the phantoms came dashing through her mind in ceaseless variety, all apparently fragments, or slight sketches of future greatness, but without a probable access except the fool's ladder of hope. Her own visions were all, certainly, to be realised, and those of every other person disappointed, for the mortifications of even her intimate friends enhanced the pleasure of anticipated success; and while her plans were like the portraits of Queen Elizabeth, without a single shade, or like temples of spun sugar, all sweetness

without solidity, the crowning joy of all was, to be envied, even more than to be admired.

While Agnes thus piled hope upon hope, her wishes were dedicated to very solid possessions. In childhood her world had been a world of *bon bons* and rattles, and now the kaleidoscope of her imagination was filled with an ever-changing galaxy of jewels, titles, equipages, toys, gold, bijouterie, and coronets, among which the Marquisate of Doncaster owed some of its prominence to the distinguished place it claimed in the herald's office. Conscious that she had been born with a peculiar genius for fine ladyism, Agnes considered the world as a large easy chair, wherein she might lounge away life in a perpetual gala, enjoying all the luxuries, and amused with all the trivialities of life. Having an idea that her undoubted birth-right was distinction and happiness, she considered it an undeserved injury to be deprived of a single delight on which her heart was set. Carelessly despising the duties or affections of life, she coveted only its diversions,

and her favourite consolation, amidst its actual annoyances, was frequently to

> Blow sportive bladders in the beaming sun,
> And call them worlds.

Sir Arthur had always been one of the few old people who would ever allow himself to be considered well and happy, but he cultivated a placid, cheerful good-humour, which enabled him now to prepare with apparent equanimity for exploring his way through the unknown seas of Harrowgate society, though he entered the carriage to be conveyed there with very little more inward satisfaction than he would have felt on stepping into a cart which was conveying him to Newgate, being fully persuaded that no fish had ever been as much out of water in the world before, as he was about to feel himself.

Impatience only lengthens the hours which it seems desirable to accelerate, and time appeared to have become entirely motionless; while Agnes peevishly thought, during her journey, that the minutes passed like drops of lead, and that every day had some

additional hours, till that day of days should at last arrive which was to raise the curtain and display Harrowgate to her view, though she almost ceased to repine at any present inconveniences while bewildered and lost in gay hopes for the future.

Sir Arthur good-humouredly whispered to Marion, as they drove along through Yorkshire, that with such a mute as Agnes beside him, he felt almost afraid of the bow-string, and that she was the mere *tableau* of a travelling companion, who seemed, like Lady Macbeth, to be literally walking and talking in her sleep. While Marion and her uncle beguiled their long journey with agreeable discussions and lively remarks, Agnes, perfectly absent during most of the way, and out of humour during the rest of it, uttered a thousand consequential complaints about the cold, the heat, the sun, the dust, the air, or the closeness, while Sir Arthur smilingly remarked, that Agnes' life seemed to be a sea of troubles, but hope served as a cork jacket to support her through them all.

Like the fairy who turned a gloomy grove

into a crystal palace, Agnes had now, in her private mind, metamorphosed the Admiral's old green chariot into a glittering saloon at Harrowgate, filled by a crowd of admirers, each gifted with almost superhuman merit and distinction, who were to fall prostrate at her feet, making proposals which sometimes she gracefully accepted, and sometimes as gracefully declined. Nothing was real around Agnes at present; but as the picture of a friend supplies the want of the original, so the imaginary attentions of Captain De Crespigny and other victims, consoled her for their being absent, and her life became a lively comedy, where the curtain never fell, and she was herself always the principal figure on the stage.

Neither Alnwick Castle nor Harewood House attracted a moment's attention from Agnes, who cared no more for the magnificent landscapes they passed, than did the post-horses that drew the carriage; and when the party stopped at Caterick Bridge to dine, she had just put on the family diamonds of the Duke of Kinross, who waited to conduct

her to the altar. It was a favourite speculation with Agnes, that she was to become acquainted in the public room at Harrowgate, with some handsome *incognito*, the sort of perfect Adonis whom alone it would be possible to marry; and after dancing, flirting, dining, and supping with him, he was to turn out the Duke of Somebody, who should make her a long-sighed-for declaration of undying attachment, while Barons, Earls, Viscounts, and above all, Captain De Crespigny, should be plunged into the depths of despair by her accepting him.

Agnes' lovers were never estimated according to the qualities of their head or heart, but according to the trivialities of their dress and appearance. Like the Grecian artist, in love with an image of his own forming, the description of her intended lovers, with which she occasionally favoured Marion, resembled a lecture on comparative anatomy, so emphatic was she on the necessity of his being neither too tall, nor too short, too dark, nor too fair while she would evidently have considered a bad temper less objectionable than a bad com-

plexion, and was ready to tolerate a man who was dissipated, rather than one who was awkward.

In the estimation of Agnes "good society" was composed entirely of Lords and Ladies, while her fancy very seldom strayed out of the peerage; though she did sometimes take the trouble to fancy herself admired by some distinguished commoner of more than ordinary celebrity, merely for the pleasure of rejecting him, and swelling her right honourable triumph, when she exchanged her wreath of roses for a coronet. Those who had been proverbially inconstant to other ladies, would now become unchangeably devoted to her; and if she heard of any individual more than commonly fatal to the peace of other ladies, her fertile mind suggested scenes of romance and rapture, where the injuries of others would be more than revenged by the distracting suspense in which she meant to hold her intended victim.

While the world thus ran upon castors in the imagination of Agnes, no novel could be nearly so interesting as her own rose-coloured dreams, because in none could she be herself

the heroine; but when reading the most romantic romances, they served occasionally to suggest new scenes of emotion and of pleasure, which could be adapted with variations to her own case, while all she saw in books flitted like a gay phantasmagoria from her mind, except what could be in any way applied to herself. The business of life, in short, was, she thought, to make every man living in love with her, and to get through existence like a party of pleasure, crowding into it the greatest possible variety of amusements, and ending the whole with orange flowers. Brussels lace, wedding-cake, and favours.

None of the sacred duties or home affections ever entered into Agnes' calculations. She lived merely for the triumphs of society; while Marion existed for the happiness of home, seeking only the redeeming points of life, and absorbed in a prevailing desire to deserve and to obtain the attachment of those who were by nature nearest and dearest to herself. As the proverb says, "A long road or a bad inn, teach us to know our companions;" but all that a generous person can do for others, and

all that a selfish person fancies he could do, Marion did, with unobtrusive attention, for Sir Arthur and Agnes during the journey; while her sister sarcastically remarked, that even if Dash wagged his tail to her, she seemed grateful for his regard.

CHAPTER XV.

"Agreeable accident! Chance presents you to my eyes when you were least expected!"

GIL BLAS.

IT was on a pleasant evening towards the end of August, that Sir Arthur's chariot stopped at the Granby Hotel, which looked to the travellers more like an entire street than a single house; and Marion thought that accommodation might be prepared in it for all the invalids in Great Britain. Her ears were instantly deafened by a noisy clamour of bells, while the carriage was surrounded by a cluster of shabby waiters, in second-hand-looking clothes, dishevelled hair, soiled cotton stockings, and dusty shoes, who were vociferous in

their protestations that the house was already more than full, and that a hundred and fifty guests dined every day at the ordinary. In the mean time, however, they hurriedly dismounted Sir Arthur's baggage from the chariot, and at length ushered him into a sitting room, with a promise of finding sleeping apartments for the whole party, up three pair of stairs, in a lodging across the common, a tall old building spotted over like a plum-pudding with windows, where they must be ready to abdicate on a moment's notice, if necessary, the whole house having been bespoke some weeks before, for Miss Howard Smytheson the heiress, and suite.

No place is so little changed by lapse of time as Harrowgate, during the last two centuries which have elapsed since first its unpalateable waters were tasted. There the same three great hotels flourish supreme, as in the days of Smollett, holding their crowded ordinaries, and distinguished by their former designations, as the House of Lords, the House of Commons, and the House of Drs. There during three months of every successive year,

an equal crowd assembles in search of health for their disordered bodies, and excitement for their stagnant minds, while time and money are frantically squandered, as if both were dealt out in unlimited portions among all who thus emulously seek with wearied eagerness for frivolous amusements, idle flutter, and all those relaxations of an unsatisfied existence, which soon become intolerable to those who can amuse themselves, but necessary to those who cannot.

The very same rooms and furniture, the very same tables, knives, glasses, and spoons, and the same hours of eating and drinking, which were in use during the time of old Humphrey Bramble, are still in existence, while every thing remains as much unaltered as the blue firmament above, except the company. Year after year has, at Harrowgate, even more, perhaps, than elsewhere, testified the ceaseless mutability of human affairs, where, amidst light laughter, mirth, and music, the young have become married, the old have died, and, as days roll on in that little world of eager excitement, the names of all are soon alike for-

gotten. At Harrowgate the visitors seem scarcely more permanently interested in each other than in actors on the stage, or in characters represented by a novelist. Any lounger who appears in the public saloons a second year, becomes completely naturalized in the house; after a third season, it is ten to one he may be considered a bore; and, during his fourth or fifth, he is completely superannuated. In these gay rooms, how much of human life and feeling have existed! how many of its joys and sorrows been experienced! and how many of its deepest interests have arisen, amidst the gay dance, the ringing laugh, the lively coquetry, the frantic dissipation, and the vows of endless attachment! With many a past generation, the fever of frivolity is over, and the dust of death now shrouds every remembrance in oblivion; but a new race yet successively arises, to exist, like their predecessors, in an atmosphere of music, dancing, flirting, riding, driving, feasting, and gayety,

"Smiling as if earth contain'd no tomb!"

"I cannot but think, when arriving at any

new place," observed Marion, "what solitary desolation must frequently be experienced by those 'citizens of the world,' who are for ever on wing, from country to country, throughout the habitable and uninhabitable globe! We who live only for social companionship, would feel perfectly lost in arriving at a perpetual succession of places, where not one human being depends upon us for comfort or enjoyment—where not a single genuine tear would be shed by any living individual, if we dropped down dead at their feet!"

"You are right, Marion!" replied Sir Arthur. "Once when taken dangerously ill abroad, I was surrounded by those only to whom my very language was unknown, my features strange, my name unheard of, and my whole feelings indifferent. It was dreary and desolate indeed! A new place may divert us for a time, but we do not live to enjoy mere scenery or mere amusement. To find real happiness we must look within the circle of home feelings, home duties, and home enjoyments."

When the very aristocratic and distin-

guished-looking Sir Arthur Dunbar first appeared in the public room at the Granby, leading in his two radiantly beautiful nieces, the babbling murmur of conversation became suddenly hushed, while a general whisper of surprise and admiration circulated round the tea-table. Many an eager inquiry was rapidly promulgated who they could possibly be, and from whence they came; while Lord Wigton, to produce some amusement, secretly announced, that it was the Duke of Lincolnshire and his two eldest unmarried daughters.

The better half of pleasure was its novelty to Marion, whose half-shy, half-amused looks as she thus entered among a score or two of perfect strangers, formed a pleasing contrast to the criticising, examining, fastidious air with which Agnes, in the full swell of magnificence, glanced her brilliant, haughty eyes round the tables, and muttered contemptuously to Sir Arthur, that the living furniture in the room seemed little better than a zoological garden,—a human menagerie of tigers, bears, and monkeys, varied by a large proportion of red inflamed strawberry-coloured faces be-

longing to the water-drinkers. By no means satisfied with the commencement of her Harrowgate existence, Agnes established on the spot a little whispering gallery of satirical discontent, while she ridiculed to Marion those of the company who were unlucky enough first to attract her notice and her disapprobation.

Though the room appeared abundantly peopled with *dramatis personæ* of many kinds and degrees, yet, instead of seeing, as she had rather too sanguinely anticipated, a society of distinguished-looking personages, as select as if they had been introduced at a drawing-room in St James' Palace, the saloon was encumbered with groups of people as ridiculous as any that Agnes ever remembered to have seen at a country theatre. Old *beaux* of half a century's duration,—two or three remarkably conceited, over-dressed officers in full-fledged mustachios,—crowds of busy, bustling, managing-looking mothers,—four or five over-dressed Irish fortune-hunters,—a knot of agricultural, kill-your-own-mutton country gentlemen,—one or two widows of

not very doubtful age, but *rouged* to excess,—a few Oxonian professors, who were F.R.S. and the whole alphabet besides,—a multitude of whist-playing clergymen, reverend only on their visiting cards, who bore no symptom of their profession, except a white neckcloth,—many old people to be made young, and young people to be made younger,—besides nearly an acre of very un-Almacks-like young ladies, showily attired in pink, blue, or yellow, like a bed of tulips, all in very gay spirits, or pretending to be so, who seemed to lead a life of perpetual smiles and good-humour, as if all the troubles of existence were unknown or a mere laughing matter to them.

Sir Arthur was not long in having a delighted recognition with an old, wooden-legged messmate, Captain Ogilvie, who introduced to Marion his "three head of daughters," pretty animated girls; and Agnes hastily seated herself at the tea-table, disappointed beyond measure in the first chapter of her adventures, and half determined already to set about hating the whole party. Though deceived only by her own too vivid anticipa-

tions, she felt in some way or other imposed upon, in being unexpectedly introduced to such very third-rate society, and for several minutes she maintained a petulant silence, so very unlike her usual volubility, that she began, before long, to wish for some one with whom to enjoy a laugh at the whole circle of whimsical-looking oddities.

Close beside the seat on which Agnes had accidentally placed herself, she very soon observed an old gentleman considerably past the meridian of life, who nevertheless dressed with very obvious pretensions to youth, wearing a fashionable, well-contrived wig, a perfectly startling set of teeth, and a gouty black velvet shoe. His figure was well-built, and he had altogether a look of individual eccentricity peculiar to himself, with an air of supercilious haughtiness, which testified that, like Agnes, he thought himself too good for his company.

"Who can he be?" thought she, finding his eye fixed upon herself with a fastidious look of connoisseurship, such as that with which he might have examined some doubtful

copy of a Vandyke or Titian, while an expression of complacent approbation gradually stole into his features. "Probably some eminent artist! He may perhaps ask leave to do my picture for the exhibition!"

Having reached this conclusion, she was almost startled to hear herself addressed by her unknown neighbour, in a consequential, rather patronising voice, and with an air of unembarrassed distinction, while he evidently watched her countenance with the same look of criticism as before, so that she felt certain if there had been a flaw in her teeth, or a single hair disarranged on her head, it could not have escaped his notice. So fastidious a personage seemed almost worth the trouble of pleasing, and Agnes, after replying rather graciously to his first few remarks, became exceedingly surprised to discover that there was a tone of well-bred command in his dry cynical manner, united with the most perfect polish, which both awed and surprised her. His assumption of superiority and importance seemed almost unconscious, but he evidently entertained not the fraction of a doubt that

his conversation was a singular honour and an agreeable acquisition to any one on whom he condescended to bestow the slightest attention.

"I have lived here lately at the rate of twenty new acquaintances a-day, and am happy this evening in adding another to my usual allowance. One must enter into the humours of a place like Harrowgate, and do at Rome as Rome does," said he, in a somewhat haughty supercilious tone. "This is the only spot in all the earth where English people attempt the ease and sociability of foreign manners, and we must acknowledge it fits rather awkwardly. Nevertheless, being in my own neighbourhood, I make a point every year of lending my countenance for a short time to this house."

Agnes gave an undervaluing glance at her companion, and privately thought his thin dry countenace, with every vein like whip cord, might very well have been dispensed with, but though he appeared to be unpardonably ugly, she prudently sipped her tea in silence, looking somewhat askance at the

little consequential gentleman beside her; while he took the opportunity of examining her profile with his keen observant eye, after which, having apparently satisfied himself that she was worth the honour of being spoken to, he continued, in a hard croaking voice, like a door grating on its rusty hinges,

"The company here is nearly of the same calibre as you might probably encounter in a Margate hoy, or in a second-class train on the Birmingham railroad."

"Or at Bartholomew fair," added Agnes, determined not to be out-done. "I feel as if we were dining for once at the second table. There should be door-keepers at Harrowgate to keep out the *canaille!* I wonder Captain De Crespigny misinformed my brother so much about the society here; but he would have said anything to make us come."

"No one would ever dream, in his wildest moments, of visiting Harrowgate for society. Mere knife-grinders from Sheffield, and country curates," replied her fastidious companion in a short abrupt tone. "Are you acquainted with Louis De Crespigny?

"Yes; everybody who is anybody knows him, and those who do not often pretend they do," replied Agnes, indignant at the easy, almost contemptuous manner in which her companion named one whom she considered as her own peculiar property. "Not to know him would argue ourselves unknown."

"I certainly am unknown," said her companion with a strange little conscious laugh, which seemed to Agnes quite unaccountable." "Has De Crespigny so universal an acquaintance? People must be more at a loss for society than I had supposed!"

"You know," replied Agnes in an unanswerable tone, "he is the future Marquis of Doncaster."

"Is he!" answered the old gentleman with another short dry laugh, and a provoking shrug of polite non-conviction. "So much the better for him. You are quite sure of that?"

"Perfectly certain! His uncle is a rich old quiz, who never thought anybody good enough to marry till now, when nobody would accept of him. The old peer could not get a

girl to marry him now, if he sent the bellman round to advertise for one! Captain De Crespigny's succession is as undoubted as anything can be which depends on the life of a whimsical superannuated uncle, these many years past in the last stage of infirmity. He has the wrinkles ironed out of his face every morning with a smoothing iron, and I am told his very bones rattle whenever he moves!"

"Indeed!" exclaimed the stranger in a hard withering tone, and with a cool sneer on his lip. "How very singular!"

"Poor dear old man! he was handsome once, and never can forget that; but it is a century since he lost any looks he ever had, and I am told he is quite preternaturally old, withered, and whimsical. Quite ingeniously ugly! *laid à faire peur*. I should be afraid to go near him in case his ugliness might be reflected upon me; but I hear he fancies himself quite captivating still. Patrick tells me, the old Marquis invested so large a sum of money lately in a new set of teeth, that his nephew is quite uneasy lest he should be rob-

bed and murdered for the gold they are set in. He scratches his wig sometimes to look as if it were his own hair; and he had an ossification of the leg last year, in consequence of a disappointment in love!"

"Very remarkable!"

"Yes!" added Agnes, encouraged by the attention she had evidently excited, and happy to vent all her long accumulated antipathy. "The oldest man who ever lived certainly died at last, but I believe nobody ever before existed so long in this world without doing one atom of good either to himself or others. He keeps a Roman Catholic Abbé to think for him; and once his wig turned grey in a single night with distress of mind when they had a quarrel. The Marquis is so afraid of apoplexy, that when he walks out the Abbé Mordaunt always carries a lancet to bleed him instantly, in case he has a fit."

"How very considerate! You have all this authentic intelligence on the best authority of course?" asked the stranger with a submissive bow. "De Crespigny's entire! I understand the nephew has not inherited his

uncle's antipathy to marrying! If this very whimsical old relative could be safely packed into his grave,—let me assure you he is even more whimsical than has been represented, though not quite so infirm,—I suppose Captain De Crespigny would very soon dispose of himself and his coronet."

"Certainly!" replied Agnes, unable to repress a conscious smile and heightened colour. "In that case we should all probably see before long a Marchioness of Doncaster!"

"I might not, perhaps, live to be introduced," answered the old gentleman demurely. "And I could lay a bet that, as long as I exist, we shall never have Captain De Crespigny in the peerage. If you happen, however, to know any young lady at all impatient to become Marchioness of Doncaster, let her consult me, and I could, perhaps, suggest a shorter cut to that situation, than by waiting for Louis De Crespigny."

"How!" exclaimed Agnes, with a bewildered look. "Quite impossible!"

"Unless by accepting the present Marquis, who ought, by your description, to go very

cheap, old, whimsical, and infirm as he is!" replied the stranger, with a sly smile, and a graceful bow. "The report you have heard of Lord Doncaster is such, that I feel almost tempted to forswear my own name!"

Agnes never in her life approached more nearly to a genuine fainting fit, than on hearing these words, and to have been swallowed up in an earthquake would have been quite a relief. She felt now like Abon Hassan, when he made the vizier bite his finger to ascertain if he were really awake, while, with a look of vacant wonder, she became aware that the middle-aged, nearly good-looking, and very elegant man beside her, was actually the old, worn-out, almost dead, and all but buried uncle, whose demise Captain De Crespigny had led her daily or hourly to expect for the last two years. If his ghost had appeared, she would not have been half so much astonished, while he seemed evidently more amused than he chose to acknowledge, at having created such a sensation, which he was by no means inclined to diminish, while silently admiring the beautiful fluctuations of expression

in Agnes' resplendent eyes, fixed on himself with almost incredulous amazement. At length he rose to take leave, with a smiling supercilious bow, and beckoned in an authoritative manner to a clerical-looking gentleman at some distance, to follow him, who spoke in a voice of almost feminine softness, though Agnes thought the expression of his countenance peculiarly sinister and forbidding.

"That, then, must be the Abbé Mordaunt!" exclaimed Agnes, almost aloud, while she gazed at his stern, sallow countenance, his shaggy eyebrows, low forehead, and artful-looking smile. "He might act the villain in any melo-drama! I would rather not stand between that man and any earthly object he may set his heart on! He is the most Jesuitical-looking Jesuit I ever beheld!"

Though Agnes' first rencontre with the Marquis of Doncaster had been so calamitous, and her first prejudice against his shadow, the Abbé, had seemed most inveterate, she yet spent much of her time for the next few days in their society, and was delighted to engross the attention and the evident ad-

miration of the two most distinguished-looking personages at the ordinary, while, without scruple, she flattered the Marquis most flagrantly, by laughing to excess at her own very mistaken ideas of him previous to their meeting, and hinting that this had rendered her subsequent surprise the more agreeable. Lord Doncaster in return amused himself with talking to her in a style suited to the female society in which most of his own time had hitherto been spent, though it should not certainly have suited any young girl educated like Agnes, who stretched her complaisance, however, to the utmost for a nobleman, and the uncle of her intended, Captain De Crespigny.

Marion's refined and delicate feelings shrank at once from the libertine freedom of look and manner which she could not but observe in the old Marquis' tone to ladies, and though he repeatedly tried to engage her in the flippant and almost dissolute conversation which, in a low lover-like tone, he addressed to her sister, and made an ostentatious display of his admiration for both, Marion, disgusted and shocked at what seemed so utterly un-

suitable to his years, gently but decidedly evaded all intercourse, being of opinion that the coquetry which was dishonourable in the nephew, became ridiculous and contemptible in the uncle, therefore she behaved to him with distant politeness, and a degree of gravity by no means natural to her in general. Marion devoted herself almost exclusively to Sir Arthur, leading him about in his walks, and enlivening his conversation with old Captain Ogilvy, while she could not but frequently compare the age and respectability of her venerable uncle, with the almost equal age and very opposite character of the old Roman Catholic Marquis, whose thin skeleton figure, hollow ghost-like laugh, and old stories, as broad as they were long, formed as unsuitable a contrast to his juvenile dress and manners, as his withered aspect did, to the fresh and fragrant flowers he constantly wore in his button-hole, and of which he lavished a splendid profusion on Agnes.

Marion observed with increasing surprise and regret, that the lively *persiflage* of her sister with the Marquis, was varied very fre-

quently by long and apparently grave discussions, with the Abbé Mordaunt, and at the end of a week, she became startled to observe that Agnes wore round her neck a black ribbon, from which hung conspicuously suspended a large gold crucifix of very beautiful workmanship. On many former occasions, Marion had found reason to dread the bitter vengeance of Agnes' tongue, but at no loss to guess the source from whence this unusual ornament had been derived, she inwardly resolved not to let it pass unnoticed, but warmly to remonstrate with her sister on the growing influence of the Abbé, which seemed surprising and unaccountable, while an undefined feeling of alarm respecting the rapidly increasing intimacy of Agnes with Lord Doncaster, caused her to long impatiently for the arrival of Sir Patrick, as she felt unwilling to distress her uncle on the subject of Agnes' extraordinary conduct, trusting that the whole affair was a mere girlish whim—a piece of missyish coquetry to please Lord Doncaster, who in the mean time laughingly boasted that never before had he made a proselyte so young and beautiful.

CHAPTER XVI.

As idle as a painted ship
Upon a painted ocean !
ANCIENT MARINER.

"PATRICK," exclaimed Agnes, hurrying into Sir Arthur's sitting-room the morning after her brother's arrival at the Granby, while a brilliant colour lighted up her cheek, and her eyes sparkled with animation; "Lord Wigton is coming in a few minutes to hear me sing that new song of Bellini's, therefore pray tell the waiters we are not at home to any living mortal, and do hold this music till I give a last touch to my ringlets."

Agnes impatiently held out a large roll of paper, but almost screamed with astonishment on looking up, to perceive that she had

addressed Captain De Crespigny, evidently that moment arrived from a long journey.

"Good morning, Miss Dunbar! We are well met!" said he, with rather satirical emphasis. "I am in a very cut-throat humour to-day, and shall certainly put an end to little Lord Wigton!"

"You have nearly put an end to me," replied Agnes, unable to steady her voice; "but I am rather glad to see you! Perhaps you may be allowed to remain here, though that tiresome man does so teaze me about singing!"

"Wigton told me he was coming to see, or rather to hear Marion!" said Sir Patrick, emerging from a distant window.

"To hear me!" exclaimed Marion, with unfeigned surprise and perplexity, while thunder and lightning both lowered on the forehead of her sister. "That must be a mistake! I heard nothing of any appointment, and have not had a minute's conversation with Lord Wigton since we arrived at Harrowgate. He heard me only once by accident, and probably never will again."

"Unless by design!" whispered Agnes, angrily. "Marion, you have certainly some underhand way of getting on with people, which baffles my comprehension!"

Marion turned away, and silently resumed her place beside Sir Arthur, who had been amusing himself by standing at the window, while she told him what carriages came round to the door, what parties of pleasure were setting out or returning, and what travelling equipages appeared in sight, of which seldom fewer than ten or twelve arrived in a day; and by ascertaining the coat-of-arms or coronets emblazoned on the pannels, she sometimes formed a tolerably accurate guess who might probably be their occupants. After talking together with great vivacity for some time, Sir Arthur suddenly felt the arm of Marion on which he was leaning, give an almost convulsive start, while she seemed with difficulty to suppress a half-uttered exclamation of delighted astonishment. She now leaned eagerly out of the window, to examine a travelling chariot which had driven up to the door, from whence a lady, apparently in

the utmost extreme of weakness, was carefully supported out by a gentleman, and before another moment could elapse, Marion had rushed down stairs, and was clasped in the arms of Clara Granville.

"Did you get my letter?" exclaimed her friend, in feeble and agitated accents, while, after the first rapturous greetings, they had retired alone into a sitting-room. "No! is that possible? How could the post have been so long delayed? But perhaps it may be as well, for there was grief, as much as joy in it."

Marion observed now with alarm, that the appearance of Clara, always interesting, had become almost painfully so. The summer bloom had entirely vanished from her face, and not only had her form shrunk, but there was a deep and settled sadness in the expression of her eye, when she added,

"The doctors have ordered me to go by easy stages abroad, but they recommended me first to try a few weeks here! The sight of you will do me more good than any medicine, and I had little difficulty—very little indeed, Marion—in persuading Richard to take

the Granby on our way to the south of France, where we are to go health-hunting and scenery-hunting during the approaching winter; but you must see now, as I do, and as everybody does, except my dear brother himself, that I am hastening fast to that country where the sun always shines, and the flowers never fade."

A start of indescribable emotion now shot through the heart of Marion, for in the pallid, emaciated countenance of Clara, she already read a sentence of death, and she gazed upon her friend with a growing conviction, which filled her heart with anguish, that soon, very soon they must be separated for ever; but Miss Granville, observing her emotion, affectionately added, "Few have more reason to value their lives than myself, Marion, and mine I shall do all in my power to preserve. We ought to be perfectly and cheerfully satisfied with every event as it comes, and while I have such a brother as Richard, my existence is precious to me. I know, however, that at all events another will reward him for his kindness to me, and one whom he values even

more than his sister, has happily learned to appreciate him as I do. Indeed, how could it be otherwise! My home will soon be an eternal world, and if I might have a choice, the sooner, perhaps, the better! It grieves me to take my brother now from his duties, without a single hope of my own restoration. I know that, for I feel it here! Change of air and scene can do no permanent good, and I wish we had been allowed to remain stationary, as it matters little where I die, compared with the importance to many, of where Richard lives."

Marion's voice, the faithful index to her feelings, trembled with emotion when she replied; but a moment afterwards, a smile of pleasure lighted up her dark speaking eyes, when Mr Granville hastened into the room, with a look of animated happiness on again meeting Marion, and his whole countenance had that look of deep sensibility which becomes externally visible, when the whole mind and heart have been awakened to those affections which end with life, and only then. To cover their confusion, and conceal her own

feelings, Clara assumed a tone of unwonted vivacity, saying, with an affectation of extreme gravity, "Allow me to introduce my brother,—Miss Dunbar, Mr Granville! I can recommend both as desirable acquaintances, and hope you may find each other out by degrees! My duty is done, and now it is your own fault if you are not speedily friends!"

Marion became every day more conscious that no one can appreciate the real joys and the real sorrows of human life but those who live for its friendships and attachments, while she would have thought wealth or rank, without affection, like a body without a soul; but Agnes cared comparatively little by whose means she obtained her title, equipages, and diamonds, provided they were likely to excite envy and admiration. In her estimation, the coarsest materials of happiness were the most to be coveted, and the marriage contract, instead of being anticipated in the light in which it would have appeared to Marion, as giving her the privilege of devoting a life-time to the happiness of the person she loved best on earth, was merely contemplated as entit-

ling her to an expensive *trousseau*, a large establishment, and a set of family jewels. In the mind of Agnes, Captain De Crespigny seemed only an appendage to his future rank and future expectations, while she rehearsed over her own coming greatness with exulting anticipations; but Mr Granville might have lost all that mortal man can lose, even life itself, and still retained the same place as at first in Marion's affection. The depth of her feelings was tempered, however, by the supremacy of yet higher and holier duties and hopes, those of sound and enlightened devotion, in which it was her greatest happiness to think that she had at length secured "a guide, philosopher, and friend."

No man knew the world more thoroughly, or had viewed it on both sides with more careful scrutiny than Captain De Crespigny, who often boasted that he saw the working of people's minds as if their heads were like a glass bee-hive, and yet he was completely perplexed, on arriving at Harrowgate, to account for the extraordinary intimacy which had sprung up so suddenly between the beau-

tiful Agnes and his whimsical old ——, but certainly not venerable relative, Lord Doncaster. It seemed to him at first a laughable jest, but before long he became struck by the increased coldness of his uncle's manner, which was, if possible, more cynical and repulsive than ever, since the time when Agnes had inadvertently irritated the vanity of Lord Doncaster by her incautious jests during their first interview.

Curiosity now induced Captain De Crespigny, in some degree, to resume that intimacy with Agnes, which he came intending entirely to discontinue; for he had meant that his attentions should be solely and exclusively devoted to the captivation of her still more fascinating sister, whom he was intent upon adding to the list of his conquests; but Marion continued to receive Captain De Crespigny with careless civility, resolved apparently to forget all that had hitherto been unpleasant or pleasant between them, while every moment she could spare from attending to her uncle was dedicated to the Granvilles. Clara never left her private sitting-room,

partly from bodily weakness, but chiefly to avoid meeting Sir Patrick, whom she had not expected to find at Harrowgate,—and his name never passed her lips except once, when in answer to a remark of Marion's, she said, "I shun another meeting with your brother, not from indifference,—very far from that. If I were only more safe from the attachments and delusions of this world, it would be unnecessary to avoid him as I do; but I am consoled for my own sorrows, Marion, by thinking of my brother's happiness, and by believing that you will hereafter value and experience together the affection of reason and principle, with a sufficient tinge of romance to give it some flavour."

"In that case," replied Marion, frankly, while a bright colour glowed on her cheek, "I should think myself gifted with the largest share of happiness that the world can offer, and much more than the whole world could bestow, if unaccompanied by the hope of that felicity we are promised beyond it."

"And which I shall share with you at last, though the joy of this world I cannot remain

to see and to partake of, with those who have all my affection and all my prayers," replied Clara, solemnly, while her lips trembled with a smile such as floats sometimes on the countenance of a Christian at last, " when all the mortal dies."

CHAPTER XVII.

"Seldom, indeed, has it been our happiness to behold a scene of greater festivity and of more refined enjoyment."
MORNING POST.

It was late one fine evening towards the end of August, when, though the rooms at the Granby had been brilliantly lighted, several windows were open to admit the soft radiance of moonlight, and the whole miscellaneous party of ladies and gentlemen resident at the great hotel had assembled, full of gay excitement, in the public saloon, where the buzz and laughter of many merry voices might be heard on every side. Various agreeable excursions had taken place throughout the morning. Pic-nics had flourished at Studley,

Ripon, Bolton Abbey, and Harewood House, while even Plumpton rocks, very little higher than the cut for a railway, had not been without admirers who called them sublime, and the petrifying well at Knaresborough had petrified many with admiration.

A day of amusement seemed likely now to end, as such days too commonly do, in weariness and ennui. Several very old gentlemen sat down to cards,—those who still made any attempts at being juvenile, flirted with the more elderly misses, and Agnes, seated between Lord Doncaster and the Abbé, seemed industriously exerting herself to fascinate them both, while, though generally careful of her smiles, she now lavished them on each side with apparently heedless profusion.

The scarcity of *beaux*, so often remarked and lamented in most societies, could hardly be a legitimate cause of complaint on this occasion, but, as Sir Patrick remarked to Marion, "in every family there is only one eldest son, while there are at least three-and-twenty daughters, each educated and prepared to take her place at the head of a

brilliant establishment; therefore, seeing in this room sixty-five young ladies, every one of whom expects to marry on at least £2000 a-year, it would require £130,000 per annum to satisfy them and their expectant mammas!"

Lord Wigton's fortune alone might have been sufficient, if divided into suitable portions, for at least ten such happy couples; but his whole heart seemed bent on bestowing it, with himself, on Marion, who found that she was pursued with assiduity so persevering, not only by him, but also by Captain De Crespigny, who had now openly abandoned Agnes for her, that, annoyed and perplexed how to act, rather than become repulsive and forbidding, which was always contrary to her nature, she silently retreated with Sir Arthur to the quiet domestic fireside of the Granvilles, where she enjoyed the peaceful reality of happiness, instead of that noisy and glittering imitation of it which she had so gladly forsaken.

In the public saloon, Mrs O'Donoghoe, a superannuated *jeune femme* of about thirty, more or less, in a dress as bright and red as a

blacksmith's forge, hammered on a decayed pianoforte a sort of tune, which might be an Irish jig or a Scotch strathspey, while several mournful-looking gentlemen had been persuaded to dance with three or four very affected, over-dressed partners, giggling young ladies, most of whom were on the shady side of five-and-twenty, dressed in stiff muslin frocks *à l'enfant*, bare shoulders, rouge, and very pink stockings.

Mrs O'Donoghoe's marriage, ten years before, had been a true Harrowgate match—a mutual take-in—the lady being a reputed heiress, without a shilling, and the gentleman endowed with an imaginary estate, which turned out to be situated in the moon. Since her widowhood, she had affected extreme youth, excessive wealth, and extraordinary vivacity, being of opinion that liveliness is the most universally popular of all qualities in the gay world, and that those who are not gifted by nature with light and joyous spirits, should assume them, though, if the exact degree of any person's happiness were distinctly marked by a thermometer on their foreheads, the

reality might seldom coincide with the external appearance, and the pre-eminence would seldom be awarded to those who are blazing the brightest in a crowd. The most malevolent persons could scarcely wish their worst enemy to lead that life of anxiety, mortification, and misery, the inevitable doom of ladies who will not consent with a good grace to grow old—who desire to seem what they are not, and never can be again—who, instead of cheerfully advancing to meet advancing years, attempt to *rajeunir leur beauté passée*, and who, vainly endeavouring to stem the tide of time, catch at every straw which affords a hope of impeding their career into oblivion. If it be indeed true, as all who have experienced it acknowledge, that a worldly career, decked with all the glare and glitter of success, is yet a weariness to the spirit, what must such a life be to those for whom it does not even assume the tinsel of deceit.

Mrs O'Donoghoe had appeared during nine successive seasons at Harrowgate, where she shone like a moving rainbow, dressing of course younger as she became older, and

being considered now quite a part and parcel of the Granby establishment. Though it had been remarked that she always appeared about the same day as Lord Doncaster, yet her usual place of habitation and means of existence were perfectly unknown; but as, on her arrival, she generally entered the public room about the same hour as the post-bag, it became shrewdly conjectured that she might perhaps condescend to travel per mail, while, nevertheless, she boasted long and loudly of her enormous jointure.

Sir Patrick alleged, that on a former occasion, when the house was crowded, Mrs O'Donoghoe ordered a bed to be made up for her on the billiard table, and that now she had bespoken one, after the dancing was over, in the orchestra, while she gladly dispensed with a sitting-room, as the deficiency formed an adequate pretext for constantly frequenting the public room, which she greatly preferred, alleging at the same time, in most emphatic terms, that saving six shillings a-day for the hire of a parlour was not of the slightest consequence to her, money being

" no object," as poor dear Mr O'Donoghoe had left her more than she could ever hope to spend.

Mrs O'Donoghoe's name appeared regularly in the weekly printed list of company at Harrowgate, and she was certainly by no means a dead letter in the brilliant circle. She sang a little, played a little, and talked a great deal, while no topic of conversation ever came amiss to her. The gay widow floundered through anything, or everything, making a thousand blunders, and adapting herself to each individual who conversed with her in succession, being ready and anxious for the admiration of all. She seemed willing to compensate for the want of silver in her purse, by having plenty on her tongue, and apparently thought, if she thought at all, that conversation resembled a game at whist, where each individual should implicitly follow his partner's lead.

In every carriage going to races, balls, pigeon-matches, or steeple-chases, Mrs O'Donoghoe generally manœuvred to get herself a place, either inside or outside, she seemed by

no means particular which; and whenever the master of the ceremonies became perplexed at balls, by an application for a partner from some heavy elderly gentleman in yellow gloves, who desired to risk his tendon of Achilles by dancing, he was sure to be rapturously welcomed by Mrs O'Donoghoe. She had been always hitherto the favourite flirt of Lord Doncaster; and her bold bravura manner amused Captain De Crespigny, who called her "Fountain's Abbey," on account of her being so picturesque a ruin on so very large a scale. Though not quite so "wither'd, auld, and droll," as he and some refractory officers had alleged, when entreated by the master of the ceremonies to dance with her, yet Mrs O'Donoghoe's best friends allowed she was thirty—her enemies protested she was forty—and the truth lay, as usual, between both extremes. Forced almost to acknowledge at last, that she had arrived on the debateable ground between youth and that uninteresting period middle-age, too old for dancing, too young for cards, and not quite beyond the excitement of lover-hunting, she still eagerly hoped to for-

get, in a brilliant establishment, the blighted hopes of former years. No unmarried man was too elderly or too juvenile for Mrs O'Donoghoe to try her well-practised fascinations on; and whether they were majors or minors, Lord Wigton, Captain De Crespigny, Sir Patrick, or the Marquis, she yet continued to hope for their admiration. Still she retained a firm conviction that every gentleman arrived at Harrowgate in the full intention of marrying within a month or two—that happy couples, at the end of every season, were to be paired off like pairs of gloves or shoes—and that every gentleman among her numerous assortment of intimate acquaintances, would at last make his own selection; but the most sanguine hope of her sanguine mind was, that the attentions shewn to her during many a successive season by Lord Doncaster, which had gone so far as even to excite some scandal, might at last ripen into an offer of his coronet, in which very ardent expectation she had recently suspended her dancing propensities, and diligently exercised on the Marquis her talents for listening, when his society

could be had, or in his absence, she even tolerated his shadow, the Abbé.

"Mrs O'Donoghoe," exclaimed Captain De Crespigny, throwing himself into a seat beside the piano during the interval of a quadrille, "only look at your old superannuated admirer and Miss Dunbar. People laugh at the susceptibility of seventeen, but that is nothing to the susceptibility of seventy. Your eyes have generally been the best of listeners to Lord Doncaster's prosing, but you are fairly outdone to night! How all you young ladies must be tormented by that old fellow's button-holding propensities."

"Quite the contrary! His conversation, though not always perfectly correct, is, it must be confessed, very amusing! Men in general are a queer set, but I like Lord Doncaster's old-fashioned compliments,—quite of the *vieille cour*,—one might fancy he had lived some centuries ago!"

"I heartily wish he had! I could back old Doncaster against the world, for being the dullest proser in the United Kingdoms of Great Britain and Ireland, with the Colonies

besides. He will die talking, for he talks everybody else to death! The Abbé, too, has no more mind than a sparrow! His conversation should be filtered every evening to purify it from bad taste of every kind. He picks up half a dozen stories every morning at the ordinary, and retails them to any wearied victim who can be forced to listen at night; when these are done so is he,—his barrel organ has run down,—and you may know when the Abbé has come to an end, by observing the hurry he is in to be off."

"You are an habitual hater, Captain De Crespigny, and have put on your black cap to condemn us all this evening; but I will not have our good Abbé hissed off the stage in this way."

"Good! Look out that word, Mrs O'Donoghoe, in the dictionary to-morrow, for you cannot know its real meaning!"

"Your criticisms on his conversation are like a shower of sleet this cold night, but I assure you the Abbé started a perfectly new story yesterday, and I have sometimes heard him say very good things!"

"Then you have the advantage of everybody else, for I have known him since the time of William the Conqueror, and who ever heard of his saying or doing a single good thing! He cannot even understand one! The whole pattern of his conversation is egotism in all its branches, and you must positively permit me to enjoy my detestation of the Abbé in peace!"

"I allow that he is in bad taste occasionally," whispered Mrs O'Donoghoe, confidentially. "The Abbé can say very shocking things without causing one to feel shocked. If he has any hypocrisy, it is in trying to appear worse than he is."

"Could any one be worse! That seems to me impossible! No human being would think of calling me strict, but of all the odious revolting sights I know, none can go beyond an irreligious clergyman. The Abbé always looks to me like a person who had something very heavy upon his conscience! a guilty suspicious expression of countenance. I have occasionally wondered, Mrs O'Donoghoe, to see you out-laugh him at some of his

own abortive attempts to be witty; but you can do many things that no other person can, and that is one of them."

"Captain De Crespigny, we must now and then laugh at other people's jokes besides our own!"

"I never laugh! I am the gravest man in Europe! I do sometimes give a bewitching smile, but never more."

"Did you ever try an ineffable look?"

"Perhaps I may some evening, when anxious to cut out old Doncaster! Miss Dunbar must find her two hours' conversation with him a serious grievance; but what would a life-time be! The ideas which proceed from the inside of my uncle's wig are certainly not the most original and amusing! Fancy him day after day *toujours* Doncaster! Dunbar says he would dismiss the best servant he ever had, if the fellow so much as admitted him to a morning visit! If I had an ill-will at you, Mrs O'Donoghoe, which is luckily not the case, I should certainly wish you were married to my uncle! Ladies and gentlemen

may laugh; but I can assure them it would be no laughing matter!"

"Well! say what you will; but I may perhaps think my rose-coloured satin has done its duty if I have an offer from the Marquis of Doncaster, old as he is!"

"Ah! Mrs O'Donoghoe! If you had worn that red satin when we were first acquainted, there is no saying what might have happened! Another day of it now, and I should be perfectly done for! With a train, you would be fit to appear at St James's! You alone, in the whole world, never alter! You must have been born a century old, and become younger every day!"

Though Mr Granville and Marion, with the good-humoured connivance of Sir Arthur, now spent many delightful hours in rational and animated intercourse, their happiness became gradually clouded with anxiety respecting the lovely but fragile Clara, who evidently drooped and faded. Her mind was stronger than her body; while resigned and gentle, she never caused a moment's distress to others that

could be avoided, though the bright eye, and brighter cheek, which might have been mistaken for the glow of health, were but too evidently caused by fever; and her brother's heart occasionally misgave him, on observing that a vivid flush, and a deadly paleness, chased each other on her countenance when she spoke. There was a nervous tremor in her manner, and a deep sensibility in her smile, which saddened the eye that looked on that form of almost ethereal delicacy, while she tried, but tried in vain, to conquer the wasting sorrow with which she thought that the vices and follies of Sir Patrick had for ever divided them.

Several transient rencontres with the young Baronet, accidental on her part, but preconcerted on his, had renewed the conflict of her feelings, and unable to sustain the nearly frantic reproaches of one whom she loved only too well, Clara became now almost entirely a prisoner in her own apartments. It was the power of principle over feeling which caused her to reject, with gentle sorrow, the expression of attachment once so precious, and the

fascination of Sir Patrick's manner to her was such, that his very errors she could not utterly hate, though day after day, she schooled her heart afresh with the remembrance how unjustifiably her own best hopes of lasting peace would be endangered by trusting her affections to the keeping of one who had betrayed others, and who would have but too baneful an influence over her own mind were they united, as he could so little sympathize in the emotions, occupations, and duties of the Christian life. While she might have said, like the poet, " I but know that I love thee whatever thou art," Clara felt that if her life were to be the sacrifice, he must be rejected; therefore, day after day, with pious resignation and fortitude, she endured the slow but agonizing martyrdom of extinguishing from her memory one whom she had so deeply loved. Sir Patrick contrived to testify by a thousand indescribable assiduities, only too gratifying to her nature, how constantly she was the object of his solicitude. Every morning Clara's sitting-room was adorned with flowers from an unknown hand, which

she felt and knew must be sent by Sir Patrick, though it was an attention he had never shown to any other; and the rarest fruit was frequently produced at her solitary dinner, though the waiter neither could nor would give any clear account of whence it came. while not a day passed that Clara did not see Sir Patrick's graceful figure lounging beneath her windows, conversing in an animated tone, with everybody except herself, or throwing himself on horseback, and galloping almost madly out of sight.

Every evening Mr Granville urged upon his sister the importance of her being speedily conveyed to the continent; but every morning Clara postponed their preparations, feeling too much enfeebled for the journey, and unwilling to lose the delightful fascination of Marion's society, who sat beside her couch all day, and every day, making hours seem like moments while they conversed together. Clara knew nothing of ennui, and never had occasion to kill time, for she valued it as time ought to be valued, at an inestimable price. She had no weariness to dissipate, as every

hour was occupied in improving her own mind and heart, while she exerted herself for the happiness of others, and never laid her head on the pillow at night without an anxious examination whether she had done all in her power for the real advantage of herself and others. It was the opinion of Mr Granville, frequently expressed, that the very essence of earthly happiness is found in exertion,—that "while a right discharge of religious duty is in itself the greatest of all exertions, even the trifles or the essentials of life must all be gained by making existence one great struggle against nature. Study, integrity, good-humour, benevolence, early rising, and moderation are all exertions that must be made upon principle,—a principle of Christian obedience; and, as difficulty is the condition of success, our frame is strengthened by exertion, our skill by practice, our reasoning powers by opposition, and he who wrestles most will wrestle best."

END OF VOLUME SECOND.

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